Dogen's Practice of Non-thinking

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DŌGEN'S PRACTICE OF NON-THINKING: AN UNCREATED METAETHIC THAT IS FAITHFUL TO THE GREAT EARTH

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Think Neither Good Nor Evil: Metaethics and Cross-Cultural Philosophy

§I.1 *Metaethics: 'Not Doing Evil'*

As academic philosophy took a linguistic turn in the twentieth century, particularly in the English speaking world, the subject matter of metaethics was realized; mainly, the study of the nature, scope and meaning of moral judgments. By extending the epistemic commitment that all philosophical inquiries might be nothing other than a matter of logic and language, metaethical theories focus upon the nature of moral language in order to query the meaning and justification of value judgments, rather than evaluate what one ought and ought not do.

That being said, metaethical inquiry has been part of the general practice of doing moral philosophy since Plato. For example, when Socrates asks in the *Meno* whether virtue can be taught, he is posing a metaethical question; or, when he proclaims in the *Apology* that the unexamined life is not worth living, he is proffering a metaethical value judgment about meaningful lives. When one reads Plato's dialogues, one is presented with a range of metaethical inquiries, including semantics and the meaning of the words "piety" or "justice." Therein, we are able to see the makings of a metaethical standpoint that can be aptly characterized as cognitivist, in that moral knowledge exists, and that rational beings have the capacity to realize such. Notwithstanding this characterization, other philosophers, such as Sextus Empiricus, examined similar metaethical matters and questions. Consider the following passage from Chapter twenty-three, "Is Anything by Nature Good, Bad, or Indifferent?" from his *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*:

> If then, things which move by nature move all men alike, while we are not all moved alike by the so-called goods, there is nothing good by nature. In fact it is impossible to believe either all of the views now set forth, because of their conflicting character, or any one of them. For he who asserts that one must believe this view, but not that, becomes a party to the controversy, since he has opposed to him the arguments of those who take the rival view, and therefore he himself, along with the rest, will need an adjudicator instead of pronouncing judgment on others. And as

> there does not exist any agreed criterion of proof owing to the unsettled controversy about these matters, he will be reduced to suspending judgment, and consequently he will be unable to affirm positively what the good by nature is. (Sextus Empiricus 1990, 250-251)

By extending his skepticism, vis-à-vis the problem of criterion, to ethical issues, in this case the nature of the word 'good,' Sextus' writings on ethics invite twentieth century metaethical interpretations such as moral skepticism and anti-realism.

Modern thinkers from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including David Hume (1711-1786) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) have also engaged in metaethical inquiry in ways that invite similar metaethical interpretations. In regards to Hume, section III of Book II: "Of the Passions," from his *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1738-1740) reveals an important metaethical point about the history of moral philosophy, mainly the biased assumption that one's moral motivation to act in a particular way is grounded in reason.

> Nothing is more usual in philosophy, and even in common life, than to talk of the combat of passion and reason, to give preference to reason, and to assert that men are only so far virtuous as they conform themselves to its dictates. Every rational creature, `tis said, is oblig'd to regulate his actions by reason; and if any other motive or principle challenge the direction of his conduct, he ought to oppose it, `till it be entirely subdu'd, or at least brought to a conformity with that superior principle. On this method of thinking the greatest part of moral philosophy, ancient and modern, seems to be founded; nor is there an ampler field, as well for metaphysical arguments, as popular declamations, than this suppos'd pre-eminence of reason above passion. The eternity, invariableness, and divine origin of the former have been display'd to the best advantage: The blindness, unconstancy, and deceitfulness of the latter have been as strongly insisted on. In order to shew the fallacy of all this philosophy, I shall endeavour to prove first, that reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will; and secondly, that it can never oppose passion in the direction of the will. (Hume 1978, 413)

According to Hume, morals are not reducible to reason; instead, they are derived from our sentiments and passions which are neither true or false; "Tis impossible therefore, they can be pronounced either true or false, and be either contrary or conformable to reason" (Hume 1978, 459). Based upon this metaethical point, when it comes to the nature of moral propositions, which are signified by words such as 'ought' or 'should,' Hume argues that such statements are not grounded in descriptive facts about the world that can be expressed through statements signified by the word 'is;' according to Hume, one can never derive an 'ought' statement from an 'is' statement.

> For as this *ought*, or *ought not*, expresses some new relation or affirmation, `tis necessary that it shou'd be observ'd and explain'd; and at the same time that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it. But as authors do not commonly use this precaution, I shall presume to recommend it to the readers; and am persuaded, that this small attention wou'd subvert all the vulgar systems of morality, and let us see, that the distinction of vice and virtue is not founded merely on the relations of objects, nor perceived by reason. (Hume 1978, 469-470)

This metaethical point about moral language, vis-à-vis 'is' and 'ought,' along with his normative claim that, "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them" (Hume 1978, 415), provided philosophical scaffolding for twentieth century non-cognitivists, such as A.J Ayer and C.L. Stevenson, who maintained that moral propositions are not descriptions of facts, nor statements that are truth apt, but rather expressions of feeling, emotion and attitudes.

Similar to Hume, though not as influential upon twentieth century Anglo-American non-cognitivists, Nietzsche also challenges the metaethical assumptions of philosophers, both ancient and modern, vis-à-vis the rational foundations for morality. For example, consider the following from Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886):

> Just because our moral philosophers knew the facts of morality only very approximately in arbitrary extracts or in accidental epitomes - for example, as the morality of their environment, their class, their church, the spirit of their time, their climate and part of the world - just because they were poorly informed and not even very curious about different peoples, times, and past ages - they never laid eyes on the real problems of morality; for these emerge only when we compare many moralities. In all "science of morals" so far one thing was lacking, strange as it may sound: the problem of morality itself; what was lacking was any suspicion that there was something problematic here. What the philosophers called "a rational foundation for morality" and tried to supply was, seen in the right light, merely a scholarly variation of the common faith in the prevalent morality; a new means of expression for this faith; and just another fact within a particular morality; indeed in the last analysis a kind of denial that this morality might ever be considered problematic - certainly the opposite of an examination, analysis, questioning, and vivisection of this very faith. (Nietzsche 1966, 97-98)

And, just as Hume believed that morality is derived from our sentiments and feelings, Nietzsche argues that, "moralities are also merely a sign language of the affects" (Nietzsche 1966, 100). Thus, while it is the case that the academic field of metaethics is born out of a twentieth century philosophical movement that was language-focused, metaethical inquiry is as old as philosophy itself.

Now, unless one is blinded by an ethnocentric cognitive bias, when we explore the philosophical perspectives and traditions outside of Western civilization, one will discover a number of metaethical questions raised and theories proffered. For example, in Nishida Kitarō's (1870-1945) famous publication, *An Inquiry Into the Good* (1911), he not only critically evaluates competing normative theories, he expounds a metaethical perspective that echoes Hume and the fact/value problem that emerges within Western analytic circles; "The fact that a thing is a certain way does not enable us to know that it ought to be a certain way […] judgments of suitability and unsuitability are not really judgments by the pure intellect but rather value judgements" (Nishida 1990, 113). Based upon this is/ought dualism, *An Inquiry Into The Good* attempts to articulate, through a comparative/cross-cultural method, an ethical outlook that reflects Nishida's Zen experience, which he characterizes as "pure-experience." According to Nishida:

> The good is the actualization of personality. Viewed internally, this actualization is the satisfaction of a solemn demand – that is, the unification of consciousness – and its ultimate form is achieved in the mutual forgetting of self and other and the merging of subject and object […] As emphasized in Buddhist thought, the self and the universe share the same foundation; or rather, they are the same thing. For this reason we can feel in our minds the infinite significance of reality as an infinite truth in knowledge, as infinite beauty in feeling, and as infinite good in volition. (Nishida 1990, 142-143)

In this passage, while Nishida does not reference the thirteenth century Japanese Zen philosopher, Dōgen, for anyone familiar with Dōgen's writings, one will no doubt hear echoes from his *Genjō Kōan*: "To study the Buddha's Way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be verified by the myriad things. To be verified by the myriad things is to let drop off the body-mind self and the body-mind of others (Dōgen 2009, 256-257). It is to Dōgen's philosophical works, particularly his ethical writings, that we will turn our attention throughout this dissertation; and, in doing so, we shall explore, via cross-cultural philosophy, how his metaethics can be brought into dialogue with Nietzsche's.

Zen Master Dōgen (1200-1253) is recognized as the founder of the *Sōtō* Zen school in Japan, and, is widely respected not only for being a religious reformer, but also for being a profound Buddhist thinker, an eloquent writer and accomplished practitioner of *zazen*, seated meditation. His master work,

Shōbōgenzō, "Treasury of the True Dharma-Eye," is a collection of essays on Buddhist philosophical ideas and ritual practices that define the monastic life of Zen adepts. From the metaphysics of existence as "One Bright Jewel," *Ikka Myōju*, to his epistemology of "The Presencing of Truth," *Genjō Kōan*, to his philosophy of mind and phenomenology of meditation as presented in his essay "A Needle for Zazen," *Zazengi*, the philosophical breadth of the *Shōbōgenzō* reveals how literature can be used as a practice for cultivating the mind.

In regards to ethics, particularly metaethics, the fascicle "Not Doing Evil," *Shoaku-Makusa*, invites us to consider ethics as an embodied practice, vis-à-vis *zazen*, that is not preoccupied with thinking about good and evil as if they are cognitively true or false. To understand this normative perspective, one must first make sense of what Dōgen means when he characterizes good, bad and indifference as unborn (Jpn. *mushō*), which is a central query that this dissertation explores. And, just as we can benefit from using metaethical concepts from the twentieth century in order to make sense of the ethical writings of Plato or Sextus Empiricus, our inquiry seeks to understand how the Western metaethical lens of anti-realism, particularly Nietzsche's version of such, might help clarify Dōgen's ethical teachings and practices, which is succinctly captured by the following capping phrase (Jpn. *jakugo*) from Victor Sōgen Hori's in *Zen Sand* (2003), (henceforth abbreviated as ZS): "Do not think at all about good and bad" (Jpn. *Issai no zen'aku subete shiryō suru nakare*) (ZS 8.27). Although Dōgen does not explicitly discuss metaethics in his work as Western academics do in university seminars and peer-reviewed publications, I want to argue that his metaethical view: (1) can be interpreted as anti-realist in regards to the metaphysical nature of values and anti-cognitivist in regards to the meaning of moral judgments; (2) constitutes an "active" moral nihilism with regard to moral ontology and value creation; and (3) constitutes moral skepticism with regard to moral epistemology.

§I.2 *Research Question*

The main research question of this dissertation is: "How can Dōgen's writings, interpreted as an anti-realist and anti-cognitivist metaethic, and in dialogue with Nietzsche's writings, contribute to

contemporary Western metaethical debates, especially regarding non-anthropocentric value creation?" This main research question will be answered through answering four sub questions:

1. What are the main philosophical and metaethical commitments of anti-realism – error theory and non-cognitivism – in Western philosophy, specifically in light of Nietzsche's writings? (Chapter one)

2. In what ways have Buddhist ethical perspectives been interpreted through Western ethical theories so far, and, in what ways can Buddhist metaethics in general provide new and fruitful perspectives within this arena of scholarship? (Chapter two)

3. How can Dōgen's metaethical views be interpreted in an anti-realist and anti-cognitivist way? (Chapters three, four, five and six)

4. How can Dōgen's metaethical views be brought into dialogue with Nietzsche's metaethical views, especially regarding non-anthropocentric value creation? (Chapter seven)

§I.3 ***Western vs. Buddhist Metaethics***

Philosophical studies in ethics can be divided into three, though not entirely separate, philosophical areas: (1) normative ethics; (2) applied ethics; and (3) metaethics. "What makes an action right or wrong?", for instance, or more specifically, "do the consequences of our actions justify the actions themselves?", are the kinds of questions that normative ethicists address. Based upon these and many other questions, those working in the field of applied ethics are able to help identify and explain complex moral issues and situations that impact our everyday lives. For example, in the context of medicine, applied ethicists are able to lay bare reasons and arguments that support a range of moral positions on beginning of life issues, end of life issues, health care, etc. Or, in the context of the environment, students of applied ethics can come to understand why the 'more-than-human-world' deserves direct moral consideration, care and protection.

Metaethics, however, is more abstract. The questions that concern philosophers working in this field include questions of semantics, such as, "are moral statements meaningful propositions?"; questions of ontology, such as, "what is the nature of good and evil?"; and, epistemological questions, including, "do we know what the virtues are and can they be taught?" While these questions seem to take us way from the everyday lives most humans are engaged in, they are indeed important as they shape normative theories and their application. In other words, while metaethics is a unique field of moral philosophy, we ought not to think of it as an academic silo; rather, it seems more appropriate to view such in relation with both normative and applied ethics as an overlapping Venn diagram. In the context of environmental ethics, we can see how metaethical inquiry shapes our moral outlook towards the value of "nature" and the non-humanized world; for example, consider the following from J.S. Mill's essay, "Nature:"

> Nature, Natural, and the group of words derived from them, or allied to them in etymology, have at all times filled a great place in the thoughts and taken a strong hold on the feelings of mankind. That they should have done so is not surprising when we consider what the words, in their primitive and most obvious signification, represent; but it is unfortunate that a set of terms which play so great a part in moral and metaphysical speculation should have acquired many meanings different from the primary one, yet sufficiently allied to it to admit of confusion. The words have thus become entangled in so many foreign associations, mostly of a very powerful and tenacious character, that they have come to excite, and to be the symbols of, feelings which their original meaning will by no means justify; and which have made them one of the most copious sources of false taste, false philosophy, false morality, and even bad law. (Mill 2012, 123)

According to Mill, when we think critically about the ambiguity of the word 'nature,' as well as the metaethical distinction between what 'is' the case and what we think 'ought' to be the case, he believes that we will discover that there is nothing that humanity can learn about the moral life from the 'natural world.' "Nature cannot be a proper model for us to imitate," for in light of what 'is' the case, vis-à-vis predator-prey relationships and natural disasters, "Either it is right that we should kill because nature kills; torture because nature tortures; ruin and devastate because nature does the like; or we ought not to consider at all what nature does, but what is good to do" (Mill 2012, 128-129).

In general, the field of metaethics can be divided into two camps, mainly ethical objectivism and moral skepticism. What distinguishes the two is that the former position, objectivism, maintains that "some moral standards are objectively correct and that some moral claims are objectively true" (Schafer-

Landau 2015, 291-292). Objective moral standards are universal; they are standards that apply to everyone regardless of whether people believe that they do; and, moral propositions "are objectively true whenever they accurately tell us what these objective moral standards are or what they require of us" (Schafer-Landau 2015, 291). Contrary to this standpoint, moral skepticism denies that any objective moral standards exist. Herein, based upon this epistemological difference, there are a variety of metaethical standpoints and theories that help explain the nature of moral values and the status of moral propositions. To survey them all will take us outside of the scope of this dissertation; however, we shall review a few perspectives of moral skepticism as they are important for the purposes of this project.

Moral skepticism, can be divided into the standpoints of ethical relativism and anti-realism/nihilism. In regards to ethical relativism, there are no objective moral standards; rather, moral standards exist in relation to a culture (i.e. cultural relativism) or individuals (i.e. subjectivism). When we consider the semantic dimension of this metaethical platform, the status of moral statements and utterances depend upon the attitudes of individuals or convictions that cultures and social groups maintain.

On the other side of the aisle of moral skepticism, anti-realism/nihilism, which includes error theory and non-cognitivism, argues that: (1) there are no moral features or facts that exist in the world (i.e. there are no mind-independent values); (2) no moral judgments are true; and (3) there is no moral knowledge. However, these two anti-realist philosophies differ in regards to the nature of moral propositions and ethical discourse. For error theory, moral judgments and propositions "always fail to describe the moral features of things. Thus we always lapse into error when thinking in moral terms" (Schafer-Landau 2015, 309). Contrary to this commitment, non-cognitivism in general, expressivism in particular, maintains that when we formulate moral judgments and engage in moral discourse, "We are not trying to report moral features possessed by various actions, motives or policies. Instead, we are venting our emotions, commanding others to act in certain ways, or revealing a plan of action," which is different from saying that our moral propositions are simply erroneous (Schafer-Landau 2015, 314).

We will say more about some of the aforementioned theories and perspectives in Chapter one, particularly error theory and non-cognitivism. For right now, it is important to note that the nihilistic/anti-realist lens through which we will examine some of Dōgen's writings on ethics in this dissertation is, *prima facie*, in keeping with Zen philosophy in general. After all, Zen is characterized as "a special transmission outside the scriptures, no dependence upon words or letters" (Kalupahana 1992, 230). According to Zen, there are no mind-independent truths that words and letters can describe and refer to, nor are there any teachings that can convey how to discover such. Everything is empty (Skt. *śūnya*) of an independent self-essence, including our expressions about things or beliefs. Thus, if Zen ethics is predicated upon realizing emptiness, then perhaps an anti-realist interpretation of Dōgen's ethics is warranted. One reason supporting this hermeneutical contention is that Dōgen, in keeping with the Mahāyāna philosophy of emptiness, maintains that all things lack a permanent self-essence. Thus, if we were to interpret Dōgen's ethics through an essentialist, realist or cognitivist lens, then that interpretation would run counter to his overall philosophical outlook of non-essentialism. Accordingly, when we consider Dōgen's ethics in the context of his practice of seated meditation, *zazen,* it seems as though that if one were to think about moral beliefs and value judgments as if they were essentially real, then such thinking would directly obstruct one's ability to realize emptiness; this is perhaps why, in his *Fukanzazengi*, "Principles of Seated meditation," Dōgen instructs his adepts to, "Cast aside all involvements and discontinue all affairs. Good is not thought of; evil is not thought of" (Dōgen 1988,177). Herein it is through his teachings on meditation, and the realization that all things are empty, that we are able to begin to discern key differences between "truth-seeking" metaethics within academia, and Dōgen's "way-seeking" metaethical perspective.

In their book *Thinking through Confucius* (1987) David Hall and Roger Ames introduced the difference between truth-seeking and way-seeking approaches to philosophy. While truth-seeking approaches emphasize justification, vis-à-vis necessary and sufficient conditions for theoretical truth, way-seeking approaches are concerned with realizing a path by which humans can flourish and live well.

This way-seeking approach is also identified by Kyoto School philosopher Masao Abe (1915-2006) as *Lebens-Philosophie*, "philosophy of life." In his introduction to Nishida's *An Inquiry Into The Good,* Abe states that the thinkers who have taken this way-seeking approach to philosophy, including Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, were primarily concerned with "the inner dimension of human existence, the creative development of subjectivity, and the irrational power of life" (Abe 1990, xiii). Thus, while the practice of philosophy in Western universities and colleges is mostly motivated by truth-seeking values and goals, Dōgen's writings on the moral life, in similar ways to Nietzsche, are motivated by way-seeking values. For Dōgen, ethics is a practice, which, as we shall see, is inextricably tied to *zazen*, sitting meditation. Through his prose and poetry, Dōgen does not attempt to prove a particular theory/ism true; rather, Dōgen's perspectivism recognizes that all theories are tied to a particular point of view and/or web-of-beliefs, and so, all theories are forever open to nuanced interpretations and counter positions. In this dissertation I will argue that as a practice, Dōgen's ethics of non-thinking (Jpn. *hishiryō*) is centered on the non-anthropocentric realization that all beings, including stones and streams, are Buddha-nature. Accordingly, unlike J.S Mill's truth-seeking perspective, Dōgen believes that there is much we can learn, vis-à-vis way-seeking values, from 'nature' and the more-than-human-world.

Since the realization of Buddha-nature is embodied within the practice of *zazen,* ethics as a way-seeking practice allows Dōgen to reformulate how we think about a whole range of moral perspectives, including karma and the teachings of 'original enlightenment' (Jpn. *hongaku*). Specifically, in regards to the latter, what is central to this predominately *Tendai* Buddhist philosophy is the belief that all human beings are inherently enlightened, "in that it was not a temporal occurrence that had a beginning and end in time" (Kim 2004, 22). What vexed Dōgen at a very young age as a *Tendai* monk was that if humans are originally enlightened, "and consequently liberated here and now within this body-mind existence, then why do we have to exert ourselves at all? What is the significance of intellectual, moral, cultic, and religious activities and endeavors?" (Kim 2004, 23).

> Dōgen's initial question may be restated as follows: If, as Tendai Buddhism expounds, all sentient beings are originally endowed with the Buddha-nature and are inherently awakened to their true nature, why is it necessary for so many Buddhist practitioners in the past, present, and future to set upon a religious quest and practice various forms of Buddhist discipline to attain enlightenment? Are not that resolve and practice unnecessary? (Abe 1992, 20)

As we explore a selection of fascicles within Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō*, we shall see how Dōgen's way-seeking perspective on the moral life advances a moral imagination that includes all sentient and insentient beings within the class of beings that are "originally enlightened."

As noted above, within the academic field of metaethics, philosophies such as error theory and non-cognitivism have been characterized as nihilistic since they both argue that the values and standards for moral behavior are not mind-independent facts (i.e. naturalism), nor are they mind-independent non-natural properties (i.e. intuitionism). Contrary to the popular opinion, this does not mean that anti-realism/nihilism is a threat to cultural values vis-à-vis pessimism and apathy (i.e. what Nietzsche calls passive nihilism). No doubt, anti-realism challenges a range of cultural perspectives that adhere to some version of foundationalism; however, the negation of metaethical realism/objectivism does not entail that individuals who lean towards anti-realism are categorically apathetic, and thus, either don't care about anything, or are unable to participate in conventional moral discourse within the field of applied ethics. Thus, it is along this anti-realist horizon of metaethics that we find ourselves journeying into this dissertation. While some Dōgen scholars, such as Hee-Jin Kim, are reluctant to characterize this thirteenth century Zen master in this way, my characterization of Dōgen as an anti-realist is consistent with Kōshō Itagaki's *Sōtō* Zen perspective that:

> Nothing in all of being is superior or inferior. For the sake of convenience, people make distinctions and value judgments, but these can only apply in context of individual situations. They do not pertain to reality itself, where there is neither good nor bad, neither greater nor lesser, neither superior nor inferior. All existence is complete just as it is. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, this teaching is expressed as: "Equality is Distinction. Distinction is equality." Distinction means difference, and is not merely the label of a doctrine. Everything is for that time, and existence at that time is everything; relative distinctions are not absolute. (Itagaki 2016, 26-27)

To maintain that value judgments do not correspond to mind-independent facts or truths, and that neither good nor evil are discoverable in nature, but rather invented in light of interpersonal situations, is to

defend anti-realism in its bare bones form. According to Itagaki, Dōgen's ethics is non-dualistically framed in light of the Mahāyāna philosophy of emptiness (Skt. *śūnyatā*) whereby all phenomenal beings and ideas are understood to be dependently-conditioned (Skt. *pratītyasamutpāda*) and without an inherent self-nature (Skt. *svabhāva*). As I understand Itagaki's interpretation of Dōgen, this philosophy of non-foundationalism entails that metaethical realism/objectivism/cognitivism is flawed since such positions defend the existence of mind-independent moral values and/or truths. From a Mahāyāna perspective, all beliefs and value judgments are mind-dependent; and, all mind-dependent beliefs and judgments are dependent upon various antecedent conditions that are situational and relative. Thus, they are empty. Or, as Dōgen states in the fascicle *Shoaku-Makusa*, all value judgments - good, bad and indifference – are 'uncreated' (Jpn. *mushō*).

Dōgen's metaethical standpoint of anti-realism - all values and moral beliefs are *mushō* - is the central pillar of this study as it provides support for our analysis of: (1) Dōgen's philosophy of language in the context of ethics; (2) Dōgen's interpretation of the Buddhist philosophy of karma; (3) the interface between ethics, meditation, and non-thinking (Jpn. *hishiryō*); and (4) the comparative horizons between the metaethical perspectivism of Dōgen and Nietzsche, particularly in regards to non-anthropocentric value creation. Accordingly, I will show that "anti-cognitivism," rather than error theory or non-cognitivism, is the metaethical perspective that best characterizes Dōgen's standpoint regarding the status of moral propositions in general, his normative instructions concerning meditation, *zazen,* in particular. Since this is a term that is not conventionally used by scholars of metaethics, it is worth noting how I stipulate its meaning.

What do I mean by anti-cognitivist? In short, anti-cognitivism is the metaethical standpoint that moral propositions are not about properties facts or truths; rather, moral propositions reveal perspectives. As we noted above, error theory maintains that moral propositions refer to mind-independent truths; however, unlike realism and objectivism, error theory contends that this belief is an erroneous judgment for there are no objective moral values that actually exist. All moral propositions are, according to error

theory, false. Thus, as an anti-realist philosophy, anti-cognitivism does not share the error theoretical standpoint that moral propositions are truth apt. However, this epistemic commitment does not entail the non-cognitive standpoint that moral statements/propositions are reducible to our attitudinal dispositions that unfold from our embodied affects feelings and emotions. The term anti-cognitivism is a nuanced metaethical outlook that is quite similar to atheism whereby the denial of the existence of 'God' is not necessarily accompanied by an alternative metaphysical theory. While non-cognitivism denies that there are mind-independent moral facts or properties, they do proffer a positive thesis, mainly that moral statements are expressions of emotion. As we will soon see, both Nietzsche and Dōgen agree with the non-cognitive commitment that our embodied passions are salient to our values, moral statements/expressions and beliefs; however, unlike non-cognitivism, there is no indication in the writings of Nietzsche and Dōgen that they believed that moral statements are reducible to feelings, as if feelings in themselves are essentially/inherently distinct from reason, as Hume maintained. In regards to Nietzsche's writings, our values ascend from pre-reflective forces, vis-à-vis will to power; and, in regards to Dōgen's practice of Zen, values and normative judgments are, in keeping with the Mahāyāna tradition, realized through one's insight into the emptiness of all phenomenal things and ideas (i.e. wisdom (Skt.*prajñā*)), which in turn conditions, yet is also mutually conditioned by, great compassion (Skt. *mahā-karuna*) According to Dōgen, the mutual-co-arising of wisdom and compassion (i.e. Buddha-nature) is contingent upon the practice of *zazen* and the phenomenology of non-thinking. In this dissertation, my characterization of both Nietzsche and Dōgen as anti-realist and anti-cognitivist will contribute to André van der Braak's characterization of these thinkers as non-anthropocentric, non-essentialist and non-teleological.

§I.4 ***Methodology***

Often characterized as "cross cultural philosophy," the field of comparative philosophy focuses upon issues, problems and theories by creating dialogues between different literary sources, thinkers and traditions from different cultural groups and regions. While the history of this field has roots in the

eighteenth century, it is not until the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that comparative philosophy began to gain traction within academic institutions. As the world becomes more interconnected, and cultures continue to overlap, exploring philosophical questions and ideas cross-culturally in dialogue together could not be more important, particularly when we consider the existential threats that loom over all humanity which we must, as a global community, act cooperatively to mitigate and solve.

My inquiry into Dōgen's metaethics falls within this general field of comparative philosophy. However, my goal is not to simply to enumerate affinities and differences between Dōgen and Western metaethics in general, Nietzsche's metaethics in particular. As noted above, this dissertation offers a metaethical interpretation of Dōgen's writings that is: (1) anti-realist in regards to the nature of moral values, and anti-cognitivist in regards to the meaning of moral judgments; (2) nihilistic – active nihilism – with regard to moral ontology; and (3) skeptical in regards to moral epistemology. Herein, I recognize that there are inherent challenges and obstacles that this philosophical pursuit faces, including the chauvinistic tendency to recreate other traditions in the image of one's own, or the incommensurability and inability to translate concepts from one tradition and meaningfully apply such to another tradition. However, I believe it would be a mistake to abort our comparative inquiry and ignore what might be a meaningful cross-cultural dialogue simply because our inquiry might turn out erroneous. By being mindful of these challenges, and by employing the tools of critical thinking, my examination will avoid pigeonholing Dōgen within specific metaethical camps that do not share the nuances his perspective embodies.

§I.5 *Overview of Chapters*

My inquiry in this dissertation is divided into seven chapters and a conclusion. In Chapter one, "Anti-realism in Contemporary Metaethics and Nietzsche*,"* we begin by exploring the emergence of anti-realism in general, error theory and non-cognitivism in particular. After examining some of the twentieth century analytic arguments and positions, including the subtle differences between emotivism and

prescriptivism and expressivism, our examination of metaethics will focus primarily upon Nietzsche's metaethical perspective. Herein our inquiry will consider two general areas of Nietzsche's metaethics: (1) perspectivism vis-à-vis the 'death of God' and nihilism as a cultural phenomenon; (2) anti-realist commitments vis-à-vis the nature of language and the nature of the affects. From this examination we shall discover that while the anti-realist designation is useful for characterizing Nietzsche's metaethics, both error theory and non-cognitivism fall short in being able to capture the nuances of his perspectivism, vis-à-vis the will to power. Thus, this chapter will show that Nietzsche is anti-realist in regards to the existence of moral facts, properties or mind-independent truths; and, in regards to moral propositions and statements, I will characterize Nietzsche as anti-cognitivist according to the stipulated definition noted above. Ultimately this chapter will equip us with the philosophical tools and concepts for interpreting Dōgen's metaethics.

In Chapter two, "Buddhism and Western Moral Philosophy," I examine how Buddhist ethics has been interpreted through Western ethical theories and perspectives. I will showcase various perspectives concerning the hermeneutical debate regarding the merits of examining Buddhist ethics through Western ethical ideas, conceptual categories and normative thought experiments, such as the trolley problem; therein my focus will be centered upon Damien Keown's virtue-theoretical interpretation of early Buddhist ethics, vis-à-vis Aristotle, and Charles Goodman's consequentialist/utilitarian interpretation of Indo-Tibetan Mahāyāna ethics. From there, I proceed to highlight some of the philosophical developments of Buddhist ethical thinking in Theravāda traditions, as well Indo-Tibetan and East-Asian Mahāyāna schools. The goal of this examination is to help situate Dōgen within the historical development of Buddhist normative and metaethical thinking, and the multivalent ideas and perspectives, as well as scholarly interpretations of such. To do this, I conclude the chapter with a systematic review of Mahāyāna Buddhist metaethics by considering the problem of justification, vis-à-vis conventional normative beliefs, albeit recognizing that all values are empty (Skt. *śūnya*) (i.e. anti-realism). Accordingly, we shall address a variety of metaethical strategies for reconciling this metaethical problem

that have been considered by some scholars, including Bronwyn Finnigan, Mark Siderits, Mario D'Amato and Laura Guerrero, Russell Guilbault and Bret Davis. By reviewing the prospects and problems tied to the metaethical strategies non-cognitivism, fictionalism, conventionalism and contextualism, I conclude this chapter by introducing the concept anti-cognitivism so as to clarify how a Mahāyāna anti-realist, such as Dōgen, can coherently justify conventional value judgments; in short, conventional normative judgments do not refer to mind-independent normative facts or truths, nor are they reducible to mere feelings and emotions, but instead they reveal and conceal perspectives.

Chapter three, "Beginning on the Path of Revealing and Concealing: Situating Dōgen's Metaethics," provides the philosophical backstory of Dōgen's life as a Buddhist thinker and reformer during the Kamakura period, as well as founder of the *Sōtō* (Ch. *Caodong*) tradition of Zen in Japan. More specifically, by examining Dōgen's critical reflections regarding the Mahāyāna philosophy of original enlightenment (Jpn. *hongaku*) and Buddha-nature (Jpn. *busshō*), this chapter will reveal how Dōgen's 'way-seeking' metaethic, vis-à-vis his philosophy of *zazen* and the nonduality of practice and realization invites both anti-realist and anti-cognitivist interpretations. In the course of achieving this goal, I show how Dōgen's Zen perspective differs from the 'silent illumination' teachings and practice of continental *Caodong* teachers and masters. And, in regards to the bodhisattva ideal and the doctrine of skillful means (Skt. *upāya*), which are salient to Mahāyāna ethics, I will show how Dōgen's reevaluation of the doctrine of original enlightenment, vis-à-vis nonduality of practice and realization, provides a reevaluation of the doctrine of skillful means; thus, instead of interpreting skillful means a consequentialist philosophy, I contend that Dōgen interprets such in light of the East Asian philosophy of non-action (Ch. *wu-wei*).

Chapter four, "Dōgen's Uncreated Metaethic," brings us to one of the main pillars of this dissertation. As we explore a selection of Dōgen's writings on ethics, particularly his metaethical reflections on the nature of moral values, I argue in this chapter that Dōgen's characterization of the tripartite division of good, bad and indifference is unambiguously anti-realist; good, bad and indifference

are uncreated, meaning they are empty, and so, not essentially real. This anti-realist characterization is in many ways an extension of Van der Braak's characterization of Dōgen as non-essentialist and non-teleological in his *Nietzsche and Zen: Self-Overcoming Without a Self* (2011). From there, I consider some standard objections and concerns that are frequently raised against anti-realism, including whether an anti-realist can provide justification for normative beliefs. Finally, this chapter will also begin setting the stage for characterizing Dōgen, in light of the Buddhist philosophy of the two truths, as an anti-cognitivist in regards to moral propositions and normative instructions, particularly those tied to the practice of *zazen*, which will be explored in Chapter five.

In Chapter five, "Anti-Cognitivism: Dōgen's Language of Morals*,"* I begin making the case for characterizing Dōgen's metaethics as anti-cognitivist. My main argument for advancing this metaethical interpretation is based upon the following if/then conditional premise: if it is the case that Zen believes that words and letters cannot ultimately describe any mind independent truth or fact, then it is not the case that Zen believes that moral propositions can describe or express moral facts or truths. By building off of the research of Dale S. Wright, Victor Sōgen Hori, Steven Heine and Rupert Read, vis-à-vis the nature of language from the perspective of Zen, I will show that the antecedent, Zen believes that words and letters cannot ultimately describe or express mind-independent truths or facts, is accurate; and, because it is accurate, it thereby follows that it is not the case that Zen believes that moral propositions can describe or express moral facts or truths. As we shall see, this philosophy of language captures, in broad strokes, Dōgen's metaethical commitments. However, we shall also see that that Dōgen's philosophy of language is quite nuanced, particularly in regards to the Buddhist philosophy of the two truths.

Accordingly, by appealing to J.L. Austin's distinction between descriptive and performative speech acts, I will show that Dōgen's writings on ethical issues, depending upon the context, can be interpreted from a conventional standpoint or an ultimate standpoint. From a conventional/ 'crooked' standpoint (Jpn. *hen-i*), normative judgments, such as 'it is wrong to kill,' seem to describe the world, particularly when we consider how moral language can pragmatically service our desires and interests.

However, from an ultimate/ 'straight' standpoint (Jpn. *shōi*), normative statements do not describe mind-independent facts nor express mind-independent truths or properties; ultimately, everything is empty, including the language we use for understanding that all things are empty. Following from this distinction between conventional and ultimate modes of discourse, we shall discover that Dōgen does not think that we are limited to a conventional standpoint when speaking about normative matters. One can, as the Zen *kōan* curriculum reveals, and as Dōgen's writings show, speak from an ultimate perspective whereby language is not intended to describe the world, but rather is a performative act. Thus we shall pay close attention to the normative topic of karma so as to see how Dōgen participates in a normative discourse without reifying values, judgments or conceptions of right-action.

My focus in Chapter six, "Mountain Still State: Ethical Non-Thinking and the Metaethics of Meditation," is centered upon the interface between the Mahāyāna philosophy of emptiness, ethics and meditation within Dōgen's writings. According to Dōgen, the practice of meditation, *zazen*, or just sitting (Jpn. *shikantaza*), is the central practice in which Buddha-nature is realized. Since the ongoing realization of Buddha-nature is the focus of Dōgen's ethics, it follows that meditation is the focus of his ethics; thus, in this chapter we shall see that *zazen* 'is' how Dōgen attempts to show, rather than tell, how conventional normative judgments 'ought' to be justified. The phenomenology of this "ethical practice" consists of neither thinking nor not thinking, but rather a middle way mode of awareness of non-thinking. By examining the distinctions between discriminative thinking, absent mindedness, vis-à-vis not thinking, and mindful non-thinking, we shall see how Dōgen's phenomenology of *zazen* invites an anti-cognitivist characterization of this normative practice.

Finally, in Chapter seven, "Non-Anthropocentric Value Creation: Dōgen and Nietzsche's Faithfulness to the 'Great Earth'," we are able to see how nihilistic philosophies – applied in the practice of what Nietzsche calls "active nihilism" – such as anti-realism in general, and anti-cognitivism in particular, provide an optimistic, idealistic and passionate moral vision for creating values in order to realize a playful future reflected in the present moment. By bringing the metaethical perspectives of

Dōgen and Nietzsche in dialogue together, we are not only able to rethink our assumptions regarding "Western" and Eastern" philosophies, we are also able to see how their perspectives can condition and inspire a moral imagination that is not fettered to the cognitive biases that define anthropocentrism. By building off the comparative scholarship of Parkes and Van der Braak, I will make the case that not only are there 'affinities' between Dōgen and Nietzsche, but that their perspectives, when brought in dialogue together, provide an earth-centered conception of meaning whereby perspectivism, passion and play become the existential focus for overcoming our anthropocentric comportment and habits of thinking.

Finally, in the Conclusion, "Not-Committing Value Judgments Is Not-doing Metaethics," my comparative treatment of Dōgen and Nietzsche will conclude with some subsequent reflections in regards to where this research goes from here. By understanding Dōgen's anti-realism in general, and the practice of anti-cognitivism via *zazen* in particular, we discover opportunities for exploring how Dōgen might be able to help us think through philosophical issues within the following areas: (1) environmental ethics; (2) business ethics and the value of work; (3) medical ethics; (4) contemporary philosophical discussions on the meaning of life. Zen Buddhism in general, Dōgen's Zen in particular, has been left out of most scholarly discussions within the field of applied ethics. Perhaps this is due in part to the fact that many scholars and intellectuals assume that if a philosophical perspective does not champion some standard of moral objectivity, then there is little that that perspective can offer in regards to normative issues that affect our everyday lives for both current and future generations. I hope that this work will show that this assumption is misguided. Indeed, anti-realist perspectives such as Dōgen's can expand our moral imagination and deepen our moral sensitivity in ways that not only allow us to think critically about social and environmental issues, but also attune us to nature in a non-anthropocentric way whereby, "The great earth has no outside" (Jpn. *Daihō soto nashi*) (ZS 4.368).

Chapter One
Anti-realism In Contemporary Metaethics and Nietzsche

§1.1 *Chapter Overview*

This opening chapter will attempt to achieve three goals. First, it aims to provide a general blueprint for the metaethical philosophy of anti-realism. In doing so, I plan to identify and explain the main philosophical divisions within contemporary metaethics with special attention given to the differences between the anti-realist perspectives of error theory and non-cognitivism; herein, our examination will be centered around the works of Louis Pojman (2006), Russ Shafer-Landau (2015) and Aaron Zimmerman (2010). The second goal is to explore a selection of Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical works in order to determine which metaethical theories best characterize his perspective. Herein our inquiry will focus upon two general areas of Nietzsche's metaethics: (1) perspectivism vis-à-vis the 'death of God' and nihilism as a cultural phenomenon; and (2) anti-realist commitments vis-à-vis the nature of language and the role of the affects. As we explore these philosophical horizons through Nietzsche's works, we shall assess some contemporary metaethical interpretations of Nietzsche, including error theory, fictionalism, non-cognitivism and constructivism. Accordingly, we shall discover that while the anti-realist characterization is useful for characterizing Nietzsche's metaethics, none of the aforementioned interpretations are able to fully capture the nuances of his perspectivism. Thus, this chapter will show that Nietzsche is anti-realist in regards to the existence of moral facts, properties or mind-independent truths; and, when it comes to moral propositions and statements, I will characterize Nietzsche as anti-cognitivist – moral language does not describe nor express moral truths, rather, they reveal and conceal normative perspectives. By fleshing out salient philosophical commitments embedded within anti-realism in general, Nietzsche's metaethics in particular, we will be prepared to make sense of Dōgen's metaethics in Chapters three, four, five, and six as well as open a comparative dialogue between Dōgen and Nietzsche in Chapter seven.

§1.2 ***Metaethical Horizons: Objectivism, Subjectivism and Nihilism***

Metaethics is an area of philosophical inquiry that is primarily interested in the metaphysical and epistemological status of moral values and beliefs. Unlike normative ethics, which is concerned with a range of specific questions and issues, such as whether or not killing is always worse than letting die, philosophers who do metaethics focus upon questions that are far more general in scope. For example, are moral values derived from reason or feelings/sentiments/affects? Are morals objective or subjective? Is moral knowledge possible? Rather than providing moral arguments and reasons for specific moral beliefs vis-à-vis what makes actions right, or, how to evaluate human character traits, vis-à-vis virtues and vices, metaethics is interested in philosophizing about "the very terms and structure of ethical theory" (Pojman 2006, 209). Can we derive prescriptive 'ought' statements from descriptive 'is' statements? What are moral intuitions? Is the concept "good" a natural property of the world? While seemingly abstract and distant from our everyday experience of the moral life, doing metaethics is pivotal for reflecting upon how we can improve our moral beliefs and thereby formulate considered moral judgments[1] on matters ranging from health care policy to climate justice.

Within this field of philosophy, there are, according to Russ Shafer-Landau, basically three metaethical positions one can generally take: (1) moral objectivism; (2) moral subjectivism or relativism; and (3) nihilism/anti-realism. Beginning with (1), moral objectivism/realism generally maintains that the status of values and moral norms is independent of our views, attitudes and opinions of such (i.e. moral values are mind-independent); objective values, standards and norms "are those that apply to everyone, even if people don't believe that they do, even if people are indifferent to them, and even if obeying them fails to satisfy anyone's desires" (Shafer-Landau 2015, 291). As a metaethical counterpart to moral

[1] Considered moral judgments are judgments about the rightness or wrongness of an action or event. The conditions proper for considered moral judgments include: (1) the judgment is not in the heat of the moment, and so not distorted by intense emotional forces or cognitive biases; (2) the judgment is made free from mental distractions; (3) all relevant facts have been critically examined; and (4) one is confident that the judgment is correct.

objectivism/realism, cognitivism maintains that our moral propositions about actions and events have truth value that is not dependent upon our feelings, attitudes or dispositions.

Contrary to moral objectivism, both the subjectivist and the nihilist are skeptical of the moral objectivist's confidence that there are any mind-independent values or normative truths. From the perspective of subjectivism/relativism, our moral values and conceptions of right and wrong are either relative to one's culture (cultural relativism) or relative to the individual (ethical subjectivism); according to moral subjectivism, all values and normative beliefs are mind-dependent. For example, in his essay "Moral Relativism Defended*"* (1975), Gilbert Harman argues that this metaethical standpoint is predicated upon a strict logical form:

> Just as a judgment that something is large makes sense only in relation to one or another comparison class, so to, I will argue, the judgment that it is wrong of someone to do something makes sense only in relation to an agreement or understanding. A dog may be large in relation to chihuahuas but not large in relation to dogs in general. Similarly, I will argue an action may be wrong in relation to one agreement but not in relation to another. Just as it makes no sense to ask whether a dog is large, period, apart from any relation to a comparison class, so too […] it makes no sense to ask whether an action is wrong, period, apart from any relation to an agreement. (Harman 2007, 41)

The third position, nihilism, like subjectivism, also maintains that there are no mind-independent values or normative truths. However, unlike subjectivism, nihilism argues that, "there are no moral truths at all" (Shafer-Landau; 2015, 292).

> Moral nihilists join with relativists in opposing ethical objectivism. Morality is wholly a human creation – in this, nihilists and relativists are united. But nihilists are no fans of ethical relativism. Relativists believe in moral goodness, moral duty, and moral virtue. Nihilists don't. Nihilists deny that there are any moral qualities. There are no moral requirements. Nothing is morally good. (Shafer-Landau 2015, 308).

Herein, metaethical nihilism is different from, "the purely epistemic skeptic," who argues, "that whether or not there are moral truths, any evidence, reasons, or grounds we have for our moral beliefs must prove insufficient to provide us with moral knowledge or even justified moral belief" (Zimmerman 2010, 43); for the nihilist, "there are no moral truths to be known and thus no moral knowledge" (Zimmerman 2010,

43). Accordingly, when it comes to the moral propositions we use in the everyday world, they do not report or describe any moral facts or properties.

Of the three positions, nihilism seems most controversial. Since it advances a mode of skepticism that leads to the denial of objective values and normative truths, one might wonder if such a perspective would have disastrous results for society and humanity as a whole.[2] After all, if one maintains, as nihilists do, that there are no values or normative truths of any kind, then how could one ever judge an action as being unfair/unjust? How could one advocate for policies concerning climate change or economic justice if there are no foundational values or normative truths to serve as a metaethical touchstone? These concerns will be addressed throughout this dissertation. For right now, it is important to note that nihilism, and the denial of objective moral facts and truths does not entail that one cannot express one's moral dispositions and attitudes. As Steven Luper-Foy explains in *Invulnerability: On Securing Happiness*, "It is one thing to make a metaphysical claim that values lack objectivity, and quite another to claim that one does not attribute any value whatever to anything. We can deny that anything has objective value and still attribute subjective importance to many things" (Luper 1996, 91). Herein, Luper's nuanced interpretation of nihilism makes clear that nihilism is not a monolith. Rather, as a metaethical standpoint, according to Pojman and Schafer-Landau, it fractures into two philosophical camps: (1) error theory; and (2) expressivism/non-cognitivism.

§1.3 *What is Error Theory?*

Error theory defends the metaethical claim that all moral beliefs, and the values that support such, are erroneous. Similar to atheists who claim that 'God' does not exist, according to error theorists, while many may believe that there are objective values and mind-independent normative truths, they are erroneous. As J.L. Mackie writes in *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, "The denial of objective values

[2] The argument from disastrous results is as follows:
P1. If widespread acceptance of a view would lead to disastrous results, then that view is false.
P2. Widespread acceptance of nihilism would lead to disastrous results.
P3. Therefore, nihilism is a false metaethical theory. (Shafer-Landau 2015, 311)

will have to be put forward […] as an 'error theory', a theory that although most people in making moral judgments implicitly claim, among other things, to be pointing to something objectively prescriptive, these claims are all false" (Mackie 1977, 35). According to Mackie, "our moral obligations have become so integral to moral thought that there can be no moral obligations unless they have this quality" (i.e., the quality of being objectively prescriptive) (Zimmerman 2010,48). However, because nothing is objectively/intrinsically prescriptive, it follows that there are no moral obligations or normative truths.

In general, error theory maintains four metaethical commitments: (1) there are no moral features or properties that exist in the world; (2) no moral judgment is ever true; (3) our sincere moral judgments always fail to describe the moral features of things; (4) there is no moral knowledge (Shafer-Landau 2015, 309). These commitments are supported by two arguments: the 'argument from relativity' and the 'queerness argument.' Beginning with the former, Mackie's relativity argument is not an endorsement of the epistemic commitments of cultural relativism whereby, "an act is morally acceptable just because it is allowed by the guiding ideals of the society in which it is performed" (Schafer-Landau 2015, 293). No doubt, "people assert moral codes based on their familiarity with moral codes they learn in their societies," (Muhlnickel 2011,233); however, that does not entail that there are moral facts or truths that actually exist. Instead, the argument from relativity is more modest in that it emphasizes "the unimpeachable fact of moral relativity: moral judgments observed in behavior, described in records of deliberation, and stated in authoritative moral codes of different societies and historical eras are different and often incompatible with one another" (Muhlnickel 2011, 233). Embedded within this argument is the dependency thesis, which states that the validity of any normative belief is derived from cultural acceptance. In light of this thesis, it is the incompatibility of normative beliefs that makes the tenability of moral objectivism/realism vulnerable to doubt.

That being said, such vulnerability does not completely refute the objectivist standpoint. After all, one may argue that just because there is some incompatibility between different normative beliefs that are held within different cultures, there are, nevertheless, some normative beliefs that many cultures do

share, such as murder is wrong. Accordingly, the objectivist will also be quick to highlight the epistemic point that the incompatibility of different moral beliefs does not entail that there are no normative truths; they might point to one of a good many instances, such as the effectiveness of social distancing and the use of facial coverings during a global pandemic, to illustrate the metaethical point that just because there is a disagreement about normative beliefs does not mean that no perspective is right, as error theory contends. From the vantage point of objectivism, "factual differences in the circumstances of various societies result in different applications of objective moral principles" (Muhlnickel 2011, 233).

It is in response to this objectivist line of reasoning that Mackie's queerness argument is best understood. The queerness argument states that if moral facts existed, they would be so strange – queer – that they would require an equally strange faculty to perceive and understand such. Since there is no evidence that suggests that such a faculty exists, we are forced to conclude that there are, indeed, no moral facts; right and wrong simply do not exist.

> Even more important, however, and certainly more generally applicable, is the argument from queerness. This has two parts, one metaphysical, the other epistemological. If there were objective values, then they would be entities or qualities or relations of a very strange sort, utterly different from anything else in the universe. Correspondingly, if we were aware of them, it would have to be by some special faculty of moral perception or intuition, utterly different from our ordinary ways of knowing everything else. (Mackie 2007, 31)

To help flesh out the analytical import of this argument, Robert Muhlnickel states that:

> The argument from queerness claims there are two necessary conditions of the existence of objective moral facts. The first condition is a claim about the ontology of moral facts. Putative moral facts would consist of a different kind of entity or relation than those known by scientific observation and hypothesizing, ordinary perception, quasi-scientific methods. The second condition claims that the mental ability humans would have to possess in order to have knowledge of moral facts would be specifically moral. Such ability would be different in kind from other human mental abilities. (Muhlnickel 2011, 233)

Thus, the queerness argument, according to Pojman, reveals that, as a metaethical philosophy, error theory is a version of *extreme nihilism*. In light of the aforementioned commitments, "there is nothing wrong with murdering your mother or extermination 12 million people in Nazi concentration camps"

(Pojman 2006, 242). For the error theorist, when we reflect upon our lives, at the end of the day, nothing ultimately matters. According to error theory, all moral propositions are erroneous.

Herein it is important to note a metaethical counterpart of error theory: fictionalism. As Simon Blackburn notes in *On Truth*, both error theory and fictionalism "are reactions to Moore's non-natural distribution of moral properties or moral facts 'out there' (Blackburn 2018, 107); however, while error theory maintains, "that moral discussion is a chasing a will-'o-the-wisp. […] others, 'fictionalists' suppose that at best it is a useful fiction to say that this is true, although in reality it is not" (Blackburn 2018, 91). Herein fictionalism is the anti-realist standpoint that all moral beliefs and propositions are artifacts of make believe. However, when it comes to the status of moral values, both error theory and fictionalism maintain that, "it is not strictly true that it is wrong to stamp on babies for fun" (Blackburn 2018, 91-92).

§1.4 *What is Non-cognitivism?*

While sharing the same skeptical perspective as error theory, vis-à-vis moral objectivism/realism, non-cognitivism does not go as far in overturning the foundations of metaethics. Rather, as Pojman sees it, non-cognitivism is a moderate form of nihilism. "Moderate nihilism holds that, although no moral truths exist, moral discourse is expressive. Morality is merely a functionally useful way of projecting our feelings onto the world" (Pojman 2006, 242). In other words, while non-cognitivism shares the following aforementioned commitments with error theory, (1) there are no moral features or properties that exist in the world, (2) no moral judgment is true, and (4) there is no moral knowledge, non-cognitivists disagree with error theorists about (3), our sincere moral judgments always fail to describe the moral features of things. From the anti-realist perspective of non-cognitivism, moral statements, judgments and beliefs are not intended to describe the way the world is. Rather, as Shafer-Landau explains, moral discourse is either engaged in "venting our emotions, commanding others to act in certain ways, or revealing a plan of action" (Shafer-Landau 2015, 314). Moral discourse and ethical disagreements are nothing other than expressions and disagreements of feelings, emotions and attitudes; they are not descriptions of the world.

"When we condemn torture, for instance, we are expressing our opposition to it, indicating our disgust at it, publicizing our reluctance to perform it, and strongly encouraging others not to go in for it. We can do all of these things without trying to say anything is true" (Shafer-Landau 2015, 314). In short, according to Arron Zimmerman, the general standpoint of non-cognitivism can be characterized as: "either (a) there are no beliefs or judgments with moral content, or (b) if there are, they are so unlike our non-evaluative beliefs that they cannot be coherently assessed in epistemic terms" (Zimmerman 2010, 181). Unlike *a priori* claims – parallel lines don't intersect – or *a posteriori* claims – willows are green – moral commitments and beliefs are not cognizable. Though we may assert that "stealing is bad," or, "greed is not a virtue," such expressions do not cognitively 'light-up' in the same way as "all bachelors are unmarried" or "the sky is blue."

The metaethical standpoint of non-cognitivism is, by and large, a twentieth century philosophical perspective that was born out of the linguistic turn in Anglo-American academic circles. Since non-cognitivism's emergence on the stage of Western moral philosophy, it has evolved into three specific standpoints: (1) emotivism; (2) prescriptivism; and (3) expressivism. Let us briefly explore each of these to see how they differ.

The emergence of non-cognitivism as a metaethical theory in the twentieth century was conditioned by the intellectual climate surrounding the Vienna Circle of logical positivists. As an intellectual movement of the 1920's, logical positivism attempted to advance our understanding of philosophical matters (though in deflationary ways) through the pioneering achievements of science and mathematics.[3] One idea that defined the analytic perspective of the logical positivists is the verifiability criterion of meaning. According to this criterion, genuine ideas, such as 'the grass is green,' are traceable to empirical elements of experience. Accordingly, "if thoughts about the empirical world are 'made up' out of ideas, it would seem to follow that all genuine thoughts about the world must have as constituent

[3] The founders of this movement included scientists, such as Moritz Schlick, and philosophers, such as Herbert Feigl, as well as mathematicians, including Kurt Gödel and Hans Hahn, and economists, such as Otto Neurath.

thoughts that denote items of experience" (Fumerton 1999, 514). In other words, according to logical positivism, any "genuine contingent assertion about the world must be verifiable through experience or observation" (Fumerton 1999, 514).

Of his many philosophical works, A.J. Ayer's publication *Language, Truth and Logic* (1936), helped introduce the general ideas and commitments of the logical positivists to the Anglophone world. In Chapter one, "The Elimination of Metaphysics," Ayer begins by laying bare the positivist's criterion of verifiability, or verificationism, which maintains that the only meaningful statements are those that are verifiable; "We say that a sentence is factually significant to any given person, if, and only if, he knows how to verify the proposition which it purports to express – that is, if he knows what observations would lead him, under certain conditions, to accept the proposition as being true, or reject it as being false" (Ayer 1936, 48). By applying this principle to the subject matter of ethics, we have the birth of non-cognitivism in Western moral philosophy as the emotive theory of ethics. What are the metaethical nuts and bolts of emotivism? Beginning with the criterion of verificationism, according to Ayer, moral statements and judgments are not verifiable, and for that reason, they are not meaningful and/or truth apt. Ayer has us consider the example of stealing to make this very point.

> The presence of an ethical symbol in a proposition adds nothing to its factual content. Thus, if I say to someone, "You acted wrongly in stealing that money," I am not stating anything more than if I had simply said, "You stole that money." In adding that this action is wrong I am not making any further statement about it. I am simply evincing my moral disapproval of it. It is as if I had said, "You stole that money," in a particular tone of horror, or written it with the addition of some special exclamation marks. The tone, or the exclamation marks, adds nothing to the literal meaning of the sentence. It merely serves to show that the expression of it is attended by certain feelings in the speaker. (Ayer 1936, 142)

Since words like good or bad add nothing meaningful to moral propositions such as, "you acted badly in stealing the money," Ayer concludes that the very subject matter of ethics is non-cognitive.[4]

[4] In *The Nature of Morality: An Introduction to Ethics* (1977), Gilbert Harman provides a charitable treatment of the emotive theory of morals by characterizing it, like Pojman, as moderately nihilistic. As noted at the beginning of the chapter, nihilism is the view "that there are no moral facts, no moral truths and no moral knowledge. Moderate nihilism says that nihilism is no reason to abandon morality, since morality does not describe facts but does

Ayer's version of emotivism has been challenged from a variety of angles. The most forceful objection to his theory struck at the core of the logical positivist's verification criterion of knowledge. The problem for Ayer, and the Vienna Circle's criterion of knowledge, is that the principle of verification is not a verifiable proposition, and so it too is meaningless. Why is this the most forceful challenge? Well, as Stephen Schwartz states, the principle of verification, "was close to the heart of logical positivism and its most famous doctrine. Without the verifiability criterion of meaningfulness logical positivism loses much of its sting and its aura of clearing the air of unscientific mists" (Schwartz 2012, 78). Since Ayer's dismissal of cognitivism was grounded in the verification criterion of knowledge, we must therefore regard emotivism, and non-cognitivism for that matter, as meaningless theory as well.[5]

In addition to Ayer, American philosopher Charles Leslie Stevenson defended the metaethical theory of emotivism by proffering a more moderate version. In his 1937 publication *The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms*, as well as later publications, including *Ethics and Language* (1944), Stevenson defended a moderate version of emotivism which is able to avoid some of the challenges Ayer's version faced. Stevenson, unlike Ayer, concedes that there is a cognitive dimension that is part of our everyday moral discourse on such matters as stealing, climate change or abortion. Sticking with Ayer's example of stealing, the moral proposition, "You acted wrongly by stealing that money," is descriptive in that, according to Stevenson, it does give information about the speaker's interests, mainly one's disapproval of stealing. "More accurately, ethical judgments are said to describe what the state of

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something else. One often made suggestion is that moral judgments express the attitudes of people making those judgments" (Harman 1977, 27). Herein, Harman's characterization of emotivism is helpful. Borrowing his example from philosophy of religion, it is clear that emotivism cannot simply throw away moral terminology, reasons and deliberations "in the way that religious terminology is according to the atheist "(Harman 1977, 28). In other words, though emotivism is sympathetic with the metaethical commitments of nihilism, it recognizes that such commitments do not preclude moral experiences and the importance of practical/critical reasoning.

[5] In addition to this challenge, Louis Pojman also notes another objection against Ayer's emotive theory of ethics. His challenge focuses upon the theory's position that moral disagreements are only disagreements in attitude. Pojman invites us to consider the normative debate concerning abortion. This debate between those who support of a woman's right to choose and those who support the fetus' absolute right to life is, according to the emotive theory of morals, fundamentally a disagreement in attitude. However, as Pojman makes clear, this metaethical characterization "blurs an important distinction between having reasons for changing attitudes and having causes that change our attitudes" (Pojman 2009, 195).

interest is, was, or will be, or to indicate what the state of interests would be under specified circumstances" (Stevenson 1937, 494). However, this cognitive element has only a limited, incomplete role when it comes to moral deliberation, discourse and conflict resolution. For Stevenson, the primary nature of value judgments and propositions is emotive, and thus non-cognitive. Accordingly, the moral propositions we use to convey our moral beliefs are social instruments; their meanings and uses are revealed through our dynamic relationships with others and how we mutually influence each other's interests.

The metaethical theory of prescriptivism is very similar to Stevenson's version of emotivism. According to R.M. Hare, moral assertions are primarily evaluative. However, unlike Stevenson and Ayer, the meaning of ethical terms is not only emotive, but also prescriptive. In *The Language of Morals* (1952), as well as *Freedom and Reason* (1963) Hare argues that our moral language includes the following features: (1) prescriptivity; (2) logical relations; (3) universals; (4) and principles (Pojman 2009). While the prescriptivity feature of moral language was noted by both Ayer and Stevenson, Hare gives a more elaborate explanation of its role in everyday moral discourse.[6]

[6] According to Hare, the prescriptive feature of moral language is action guiding. If Jones says to Smith, "Charity is good," Jones is both commending charity (i.e. expressing his attitude) as well prescribing "charitableness." Embedded within such moral prescriptions are moral imperatives which are signified by words like "should" or "ought." For example, the moral imperative of the prescriptive statement, "you should be charitable," has the formal structure of universalizability. However, unlike Kant's categorical imperative – act in such a way as to be able to will that principle to become a universal law – Hare's method of universalizability is not asking us to consider whether there is an inherent contradiction in our willing something to become a universal law of nature. Rather, Hare's universalizability entails that when we assert any moral prescription, such prescriptions must be the same in all similar cases. "Universalizability is the well-known, and ancient moral principle that individuals or situations that are the same in all morally relevant aspects must receive the same moral treatment. This principle, in turn, is based on the non-moral principle that we must treat similar cases similarly. If one dot is red and another dot is indistinguishable in color, then it is also red" (Schwartz 2012, 274). This is different from Kant in several ways. For example, consider Kant's test of lying. He claims that since we cannot universalize lying without contradicting our willing it to become a universal law of nature, it is absolutely wrong; and thus, all rational persons have a moral duty to always tell the truth. Hare's universalizability is not as rigid and extreme. In regards to truth telling, his prescriptivism would argue that the assertion "you should tell the truth," must be the same in all other situations that have similar circumstances. If the circumstances change, then it is reasonable to conclude that our prescriptions will change as well. According to Hare, "It follows from universalizability that if I know that I ought to do a certain thing to a certain person, I am committed to the view that the very same thing out to be done to me, were I in exactly his situation, including having the same personal characteristics and in particular the same motivational states" (Hare 1981, 108).

In addition to prescriptivism, the most recent version of non-cognitivism to emerge is expressivism, as defended by Simon Blackburn and Allan Gibbard. Though there are subtle differences in their perspectives, they generally maintain that normative utterances express a stance or attitude, and in doing so, influence how others comport themselves.[7] Ultimately, what is unique about their expressivist perspectives is how they attempt to make sense of, and thus justify, the realist-seeming qualities of moral discourse (i.e. quasi-realism). In short, while there may seem to be natural or intuitive qualities embedded within value judgments and moral utterances, which in turn lead many of us to assume the existence of objective moral facts, no such qualities actually exist. Accordingly, the expressivist perspectives of Blackburn and Gibbard provide cogent responses to challenges and objections that some might assume to be complete refutations of non-cognitivism, specifically the Frege-Geach Problem. In short, the Frege-Geach problem deals with the formal or logical properties of sentences that contain moral terms, such as good or bad, right or wrong, moral or immoral etc. For example, consider the following argument:

P1. Killing is immoral.
P2. If killing is immoral, then torture is immoral
C. Therefore torture is immoral.

Regardless of whether or not any of the premises are true, and, regardless of any link between killing and torture, the argument is valid. Such validity is, as Zimmerman notes, not a trivial matter. "The argument's value consists in its conforming to a highly prized rule of inference: it is a *modus ponens* argument. And if a *modus ponens* argument has true premises, it must also have a true conclusion. *Modus ponens* is valued because it is a sound form of inference" (Zimmerman 2010, 183). Based upon this touchstone of logic and critical reasoning, the argument above seems to render any and all terms truth apt, including normative terms. This is a problem for non-cognitivism since the "atomic sentences" in the above argument, "admits of the two classic truth values: true and false," thus leaving the non-cognitivist

[7] What distinguishes these two thinkers is that Blackburn's version of expressivism – quasi-realism - has closer affinities to Stevenson's emotivism, in that moral utterances are expressions of attitude. Gibbard's version on the other hand – explanatory expressivism and plan expressivism – is more in keeping with Hare's prescriptivism in that moral utterances express the acceptance of norms.

unable to, "adopt the classical explanation of the non-trivial validity of *modus ponens* arguments when these arguments are couched in evaluative vocabulary" (Zimmerman 2010, 184). Simon Blackburn explicates this point in *The Ruling Passions: A Theory of Practical Reasoning*, when he writes, "if anyone represented themselves as holding the combination of 'p' and 'If p then q' and 'not-q' we would not know what to make of them. Logical breakdown means failure of understanding" (Blackburn 1998, 72). He then clarifies the link between logical breakdown and failure of understanding when he states:

> We can put the point another way. A mental state, I have said, is identified by what it 'makes sense' to hold in combination with it. To avow a mental state is therefore partly to express acceptance of certain norms. To avow anything of the form 'If p then q' is to commit oneself to the combination 'Either not-p, or q' and to be tied to that combination is to disavow the combination of p with not-q. Holding both together is therefore unintelligible. Logic is our way of codifying and keeping track of intelligible combinations of commitment. (Blackburn 1998, 72)

However, from the standpoint of expressivism, none of the premises in the aforementioned argument are, singly, true or false; immoral and moral, like good and bad, are expressions of our feelings which are not truth apt.

Metaethics remains to be an active field in contemporary philosophy. Recently, we have seen how the analytic tools within this field can be comparatively applied to non-Anglo/American perspectives, including Nietzsche, and non-Western traditions, such as Buddhism. For the remainder of this chapter, we shall focus upon Nietzsche's metaethics; then, in Chapter two, we shall begin making sense of Buddhist metaethics so to frame our metaethical inquiry into Dōgen in Chapters three, four, five and six.

§1.5 *Metaethics and Comparative Philosophy*

In the previous sections we reviewed some of the general positions in metaethics, specifically error theory and non-cognitivism. And, in regards to non-cognitivism, we reviewed how this metaethical outlook emerged through the philosophical commitments of logical positivism, and soon evolved into three different versions: emotivism, prescriptivism and expressivism. Now, since the focus of this dissertation is to examine and interpret Dōgen's metaethics in order to create a comparative dialogue with

Nietzsche, there is good reason not to limit our interpretation of Nietzsche's and Dōgen's writings to any of these metaethical perspectives. As we noted in the introduction, Dōgen's philosophy, as well as Nietzsche's, is a way-seeking practice. Since the metaethical perspectives of error theory and non-cognitivism are motivated by truth-seeking values, it is difficult to see how they will help us clarify Dōgen's writings on metaethics.

Notwithstanding this hermeneutical point, there are additional reasons for resisting both a non-cognitive and error-theoretical/fictionalist interpretation of Nietzsche's and Dōgen's metaethics. One reason in particular pertains to the nature of emotions and feelings. While I agree with the non-cognitive commitment that emotions, attitudes and affects are important aspects of our moral experiences and expressions, I am skeptical that Dōgen and Nietzsche would agree that we can reduce moral statements to such. Herein, my interpretation of Dōgen and Nietzsche's perspective vis-à- vis affects and emotions, is influenced by Robert Solomon's research in *True to Our Feelings: What Our Emotions Are Really Telling Us*. I do not think the non-cognitivists are accurate in simply stating that our moral expressions are, "just an 'outward' manifestation of an emotion," but rather, "an aspect of a continuation of the emotion itself" (Solomon 2007, 213). In other words, the theory of emotions that non-cognitivists appear to be championing, which is no doubt influenced by David Hume, is one that maintains that sentiment/affect/emotions are essentially distinct from reason. More specifically in regards to moral judgments, they are derived, as Hume famously argues, from sentiment, not reason (i.e., reason is slave to the passions). As we shall see when we encounter Nietzsche's will to power, and Dōgen's philosophy of mystical power (Jpn. *jinzu*), it will become clear that they don't share this dualistic view, vis-à-vis emotion/sentiment/affect vs. reason. For understanding both Nietzsche's and Dōgen's perspective on the nature of affect and emotion, I contend that Solomon's outlook will be most helpful whereby, "emotions are neither discrete entities nor distinct types but complex multijudgment processes that engage any number of different ingredients along different dimensions" (Solomon 2007, 212-213).

Based upon the aforementioned points, I contend that Nietzsche's metaethics provides a more appropriate philosophical lens for exploring metaethics so to set up an interpretative looking-glass into Dōgen's writings; in addition, this will help establish a comparative dialogue between these two philosophers in Chapter seven. Why Nietzsche? Well, as we noted in the Introduction, and as we are about to discover, Nietzsche's practice of philosophy, particularly his perspectivism, is motivated by way-seeking values that are similar to those of Dōgen. This is particularly evidenced by his direct criticisms of logical positivism. Secondly, when we examine Nietzsche's writings in regards to the affects and the will to power, it is clear that Nietzsche does not hold a dualistic view that discriminates essential differences between reason/thinking and the affects/emotion. Indeed, I contend that Nietzsche would be sympathetic with Solomon's account of emotions; an account that maintains, "we live in and through our emotions" (Solomon 2007, 10). And, in regards to the philosophical meaning of what an emotion or an affect is, I do think that Nietzsche would agree with Solomon's position of neither cognitivism nor non-cognitivism; "it is not that emotions are judgments and therefore intelligent but rather that emotions, which are rather primitive, have cognitive preconditions, namely beliefs and such, but that they themselves are not cognitive" (Solomon 2007, 216). Solomon's use of 'not cognitive' is precisely the idea of anti-cognitivism that I will be using to characterize Nietzsche and Dōgen's metaethical standpoint vis-à-vis the nature of moral propositions.

§1.6 *The Scope of Nietzsche's Metaethics*

While there are a variety of nuanced interpretations of Nietzsche's writings and philosophical works, to sift through and compare these interpretations in order to assess their merits would lead us outside the scope of this project. In the remaining sections of this chapter, we shall limit our treatment of Nietzsche to two areas of inquiry: (1) his perspectivism vis-à-vis the 'death of God' and nihilism as a cultural phenomenon; and (2) his philosophy of language and the primacy of affects vis-à-vis his metaethical views; in Chapter seven we will, in dialogue with Dōgen, explore his way-seeking-practice of self-overcoming via will to power, the revaluation of values, and value creation. Ultimately, I will show

that while Nietzsche's metaethics is clearly in keeping with the general metaethical perspective of anti-realism, his standpoint in regards to normative propositions are neither cognitivist nor non-cognitivist. And, while this opens the possibility of characterizing Nietzsche's anti-realism as fictionalist, I will show that there are specific reasons for resisting this label as well. Thus, I contend that in addition to his anti-realism, mainly that there are no moral facts or properties, Nietzsche is simply anti-cognitivist: moral propositions neither describe nor command moral truths per se, but rather reveal and conceal perspectives.

§ 1.7 *Perspectivism, 'The Death of God' and Nihilism as a Cultural Phenomenon*

There is a scholarly consensus that Nietzsche's philosophy is best characterized as "perspectivism." One passage that is often referenced to support this characterization is found in the third essay of *On The Genealogy of Morals* (1887):

> Henceforth, my dear philosophers, let us be on guard against the dangerous old conceptual fiction that posited a "pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject"; let us guard against the snares of such contradictory concepts as "pure-reason," "absolute spirituality," "knowledge in itself": these always demand that we should think of an eye that is completely unthinkable, an eye turned in no particular direction, in which the active and interpreting forces, through which alone seeing becomes seeing something, are supposed to be lacking; these always demand of the eye an absurdity and a nonsense. There is only a perspective seeing, only a perspective "knowing"; and the more affects we allow to speak about one thing, the more eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our "concept" of this thing, our "objectivity," be. But to eliminate the will altogether, to suspend each and every affect, supposing we were capable of this – what would that mean but to castrate the intellect?- (Nietzsche 1967, 119)

Based upon this passage, among a good many others, Richard Schacht has noted that, "philosophical thought for Nietzsche must be not only *progressive* and *regressive* by turns, but also perspectivally *horizontal* on the levels of both specificity and generality, in order to do anything approaching justice to the tangled complexity of human affairs" (Schact 1996, 159). To expand upon this line of interpretation, Robert Solomon characterizes Nietzsche's perspectivism in light of his use of *ad hominem* arguments when he writes:

> Nietzsche's use of *ad hominem* arguments has very much to do with his much-debated "perspectivism." That is, his view that one always knows or perceives or thinks about something from a particular "perspective" – not just a spatial viewpoint, of course, but a particular context of surrounding impressions, influences, and ideas, conceived of through one's language and social

> upbringing and, ultimately, determined by virtually everything about oneself, one's psychological make-up, and one's history. There is no perspective-free, global viewpoint, no "God's eye" view, only this particular perspective. There is, therefore, no external comparison or correspondence to be made between what we believe truth "in itself" but only the comparison, competition, and differences in quality within and between perspectives themselves. (Solomon 1996, 195)

In the same article, Solomon provides a cogent examination of Nietzsche's moral philosophy through this perspectival looking-glass.

> Perspectivism in morals means that there is no one scale of values and no single way of measuring people and their virtues, but that does not mean that there is no comparing perspectives or that some perspectives cannot be seen as preferable to others. Of course, that preference will be based on the [kind of] people who occupy it and, of course, on the person whose preference it is. But when we compare the self-confident perspective of the master with the reactive perspective of the slave, do we really want to say that there is no reason to prefer one to the other? ("Submission to morality can be slavish or vain or selfish or resigned or obtusely enthusiastic or thoughtless or an act of desperation, like submission to a prince: in itself it is nothing moral"). (Solomon 1996, 203-204)

As this looking-glass reveals, morality is not objective, but rather, subjectively oriented to one's perspective.

It is important to note that Nietzsche's perspectivism ought not be confused with moral relativism, whereby the validity of any given moral principle is relative to the individual or one's culture. The first reason for avoiding this interpretation is that relativism believes that moral truths do in fact exist despite the fact that they are not objective. In light of this epistemic stance, one of the challenges that is often advanced against relativism is that moral truths are rendered arbitrary, which is not a view Nietzsche maintains. For Nietzsche, as Joseph Keeping argues in his article "The Thousand Goals and The One Goal: Morality and Will to Power in Nietzsche" (2011), "Morality is contingent, yes, but not arbitrary." (Keeping 2011, 76). In these final sections of this chapter we will see how Nietzsche's philosophy of the will to power calibrates our values in a way that is, though contingent, not arbitrary which is metaethically significant vis-à-vis affects and feelings.

To fully appreciate Nietzsche's perspectivism, particularly as it relates to his commitment to the ongoing, and perpetual self-overcoming practice of doing philosophy, it perhaps makes sense to frame

such in light of his famous parable from *The Joyous Science* (1882), whereby Nietzsche introduces the philosophy 'God is dead'.

> Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning light, ran to the marketplace and shouted incessantly, 'I seek God! I seek God'? As there were many people standing together who did not believe in God, he caused much amusement. 'Is he lost?', asked one. "Did He wander off like a child?', asked another. 'Or is He hiding? Is He afraid of us?' "Has He gone to sea? Has He emigrated?' And in this manner they shouted and laughed. Then the madman leaped into their midst, and looked at them with piercing eyes and cried, 'Where did God go? I will tell you! We have killed Him – you and I! We are all His murderers! […] God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him!" (Nietzsche 2018, 133-134).

The significance of this oft-cited parable is three-fold. First, Nietzsche's proclamation that 'God' is dead is a metaphysical proposition in that our universe is not the creation of an omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent and omnibenevolent being; and, that we are not, as the sacred scriptures state and clerical testimonials echo, the crown of creation. In light of the many scientific advances in the nineteenth century, particularly in the areas physics and biology, Christian metaphysics became increasingly untenable to the point that the philosophical perspective as a whole was rendered, according to Nietzsche, completely erroneous.

Nietzsche's 'death of God' philosophy presented in this parable sets the stage for thinking about his philosophical reflections on nihilism. However, before we do, it is important to note that just because we are the murderers of 'God' via our advances in the sciences and critical thinking, Nietzsche's philosophical perspective ought not be interpreted as an off-shoot of positivism's philosophical commitment that science can eliminate all metaphysical beliefs such as God and free-will, and replace such with objective scientific facts. While Nietzsche does think that God, the soul, free-will, and objective values are no longer tenable, he does not believe that science will be able to provide a new foundation that is metaphysically and epistemologically certain. For example, Nietzsche attacks positivism in a number of his works, including *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), when he states:

> It is especially the sight of those hodgepodge philosophers who call themselves "philosophers of reality" or "positivists" that is capable of injecting a dangerous mistrust into the soul of an ambitious young scholar: these are the best scholars and specialists themselves – that is palpable – they are all losers who have been brought back under the hegemony of science, after having

> desired more of themselves at some time without having the right to this "more" and its responsibilities – and who now represent, in word and deed, honorably, resentfully, and vengefully, the unbelief in the masterly task and masterfulness of philosophy. (Nietzsche 1966, 123)

Nietzsche's criticism of positivism's hubris in thinking that they can arrive at an objective view of reality is supported by another passage from *Beyond Good and Evil*, whereby he challenges the notion that modern physics can provide an unbiased interpretation of the world; "It is perhaps dawning on five or six minds that physics, too, is only an interpretation and exegesis of the world (to suit us, if I may say so) and not a world explanation" (Nietzsche 1966, 21). Thus Nietzsche's declaration that 'God is dead' is not only a denial of the metaphysical claims of Christianity, but also of the epistemological values of science and the belief in objective truth. This is why, toward the end of the parable of "The Madman," Nietzsche states the following through the embodied presence of a man possessed by crazy, yet joyful, wisdom:

> 'I have come too early,' he then said, 'this is not the right time. This tremendous event is still on its way and headed towards them – the word of it has not reached men's ears. Even after they are over and done with, thunder and lightning take time, the light of the stars takes time, and deeds too take time, before they can be seen and heard. This deed is further away from them than the farthest star – and yet they have done it themselves!' (Nietzsche 2018, 134)

Thus, what is particularly significant about the parable is not that 'God' no longer exists, but rather, "given the way in which science seamlessly slotted into the same foundational space – nobody had really noticed the significance of the event" (Grimwood 2011, 52-53). In other words, "Nietzsche does not argue for the Death of God itself in his work in a way that would engage traditionally with the philosophy of religion," rather, "He is more interested in how we, as humans, react to the event: whether we embrace its full significance or continue to place a similar "faith" in concepts that remain dependent upon the same metaphysical assumptions, such as science and/or morality" (Grimwood 2011, 53). Because God and objective truth, vis-à-vis science, represent societies' highest values, and since they are no longer tenable, it follows that the highest values within society have fallen out beneath themselves; they no longer exist, regardless of whether one has realized it or not. Herein, we can begin to see how Nietzsche's 'death of God' proclamation reveals nihilism along a cultural horizon.

What does it mean to state that nihilism is a cultural phenomenon? Building upon my treatment of the parable of "The Madman," I agree with Nolen Gertz who states that, "Discovering life is meaningless is not nihilism for Nietzsche; rather discovering life is meaningless and yet going on with our lives anyway is nihilism" (Gertz 2019, 79). In other words, "According to Nietzsche, the meaninglessness of life is due not to the nature of the universe, but to the nature of our culture," (Gertz 2019, 80). This interpretation of nihilism as a cultural phenomenon, is shared by Maudemarie Clark in her article "Nietzsche's Nihilism" (Clark 2019). More specifically, as Nietzsche states in *The Will To Power* (1901), nihilism as a cultural phenomenon is, "That the highest values devalue themselves" (Nietzsche 1967, 9).[8] According to Clark and Gertz, nihilism as a cultural phenomenon is tied to the ascetic ideals of Christianity, particularly a mode of self-denial that is believed to lead, via the will, to objective truth. As Clark explains:

> But what makes the will to truth an expression of the ascetic ideal? First, it demands self-denial. It requires us to give up all the comforting myths and illusions that have given life meaning or made it seem bearable. Second, the self-denial is not for the sake of some natural good […] the self-denial required by the will to truth is being undertaken in the name of an ideal that devalues natural human existence and sees truth and the will to it as elevated above nature – as something "pure" that is not bound up with messy and natural human desires. So the self-denial required for the pursuit of truth is regarded as good precisely because it is good to curb one's desires, bad to indulge in those desires. And that is the ascetic ideal. (Clark 2019, 376)

I am sympathetic with Gertz's and Clark's interpretation of nihilism as cultural phenomenon, vis-à-vis Christian ascetic ideals; in Chapter seven, when we consider the historical roots of the ecological crisis, this interpretation will be helpful for bringing Nietzsche and Dōgen in dialogue together. Therein we will see how such roots are planted not only in Judeo-Christian ascetic ideals, but in any transcendental perspective that attempts to achieve objective truth, positivism included. To foreshadow that inquiry, consider Gertz's reflections on nihilism as a cultural phenomenon, vis-à -vis ascetic ideals, whereby all that is natural and earthly is denied in the form of an affirmation of the transcendent or the supernatural: "The elevation of the supernatural and the reduction of the natural were for Nietzsche the primary causes

[8] It is important to note that *The Will to Power* was posthumously composed by Nietzsche's sister, Elisabeth Alexandra Förster-Nietzsche, out of notes that he himself had intended to discard.

of nihilism. The belief in a world beyond the world of experience, in a life after death, justified the asceticism preached by the priests, as self-cruelty, self-denial" (Gertz 2019, 50-51). I contend that the destruction we are causing to the earth's ecosystems through our over-consumptive life-styles is ultimately fueled by ascetic ideals that are, through and through, nihilistic, all-too-passively-nihilistic.

Before we transition to (2), Nietzsche's metaethics, it is important to note that Nietzsche considers nihilism as a cultural phenomenon to be, "a transitional stage" (Nietzsche 1968, 11). What this means is that when one realizes that one's highest values have become devalued, one will either become pessimistic about the world and the prospects of what the future might hold, or, become optimistic about what one can imagine and create. If the former, then one will have fallen prey to a mode of passive nihilism; if the latter, one will have realized, with an affirmative 'Yes,' active nihilism. Let's consider this distinction further.

In *The Will To Power*, Nietzsche articulates the distinction between passive and active nihilism succinctly. In regards to the former, it is a, "decline and recession of the power of the spirit"; in regards to later, it is "a sign of increased power of the spirit" (Nietzsche 1967, 17). I contend that this distinction reveals another dimension of nihilism which is opened up by the 'cultural phenomenon' interpretation we just explored. More specifically, it opens up a vantage point into moral psychology, vis-à-vis will to power and his master-slave morality. As I interpret Nietzsche, upon realizing that 'God' is dead, and that our ascetic ideals have been shown to be without a foundation, this realization will have an impact upon one's psychology and affective state of being. For some, this realization will be devastating, so much so that one will be prompted to feel cheated. One might reason that because there are no objective values or truths, and because we will all suffer and die, as Arthur Schopenhauer reminds us in light of his all-too-Buddhist diagnosis of human existence, it would be either wishful thinking and/or existentially foolhardy (i.e. vanity) to affirmatively live within this meaningless world as if it were meaningful.

> That the most perfect manifestation of the will to live represented by the human organism, with its incomparably ingenious and complicated machinery, must crumble to dust and its whole essence and all its striving be palpably given over at last to annihilation – this is nature's

> unambiguous declaration that the striving of this will is essentially vain. If it were something possessing value in itself, something which ought unconditionally to exist, it would not have non-being as its goal. (Schopenhauer 1970, 54)

According to Nietzsche, Schopenhauer's pessimism, as well as early Buddhism, are touchstone examples of passive nihilism, vis-à-vis denial of the will to live. In *The Twilight of the Idols* (1888), Nietzsche states that Schopenhauer, "is for a psychologist a first-rate case: namely, as a maliciously ingenious attempt to adduce in favor of a nihilistic total depreciation of life precisely the counter-instances, the great self-affirmations of the "will to life," life's forms of exuberance" (Nietzsche 1966, 527). Or, in regards to Buddhism, Nietzsche states in *The Will To Power*, "the weary nihilism that no longer attacks; its most famous form, Buddhism; a passive nihilism, a sign of weakness (Nietzsche 1967, 18). The passive nihilism by which Nietzsche understands these two perspectives is important for making sense of his metaethics. For example, in *The Will To Power* he writes:

> The philosophical nihilist is convinced that all that happens is meaningless and in vain; and that there ought not to be anything meaningless and in vain. But whence this: there ought not to be? From where does one get this "meaning," this standard? At bottom, the nihilist thinks that the sight of such a bleak, useless existence makes a philosopher feel dissatisfied, bleak, desperate. Such an insight goes against our finer sensibility as philosophers. It amounts to the absurd valuation: to have any right to be, the character of existence would have to give the philosopher pleasure. (Nietzsche 1967, 23)

Within this metaethical reflection, Nietzsche is clearly denying the pessimistic assumption that suffering renders life meaningless. If this were true, then the opposite would also be true, mainly that a life free from suffering and/or filled with pleasure would be sufficient for realizing a meaningful life. Nietzsche is unambiguously clear throughout many of his works that pleasure or happiness are neither the goals for existence, nor necessary for realizing a meaningful life. In *Beyond Good and Evil* for example, he states just the opposite:

> The discipline of suffering, of great suffering – do you not know that only this discipline has created all enhancements of man so far? That tension of the soul in unhappiness which cultivates its strength, its shudders face to face with great ruin, its inventiveness and courage in enduring, preserving, interpreting and exploiting suffering, and whatever has been granted to it of profundity, secret mask, spirit, cunning, greatness – was it not granted to it through suffering, through the discipline of great suffering? (Nietzsche 1966, 154)

This passage shines additional light upon the moral psychology of passive nihilism, which can be characterized as a slave morality; and, in this normative light, we can begin to see Nietzsche's philosophical hammer at work whereby, in a spirit of active-nihilism, he reassesses the values of suffering and happiness in order to create new ones via a moral imagination embodied by a master morality. From the master morality perspective, the death of 'God" will be a welcomed event as it will provide an opportunity to imagine new values, and affirmatively embrace our chances of failure as we face a future that is for us to determine and create. To clarify this metaethical distinction, we shall briefly examine what Nietzsche means by master and slave moralities.

Both *Beyond Good and Evil* and *On the Genealogy of Morals* provide a clear breakdown of this metaethical philosophy. For example, in Part Nine, "What is Noble," from *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche lays bare the metaethical conclusions he has realized from his research into the history of moral systems and cultural beliefs: "There are master morality and slave morality" (Nietzsche 1966, 204).[9] According to Nietzsche, while there are instances whereby mixed cultures provide the opportunity for these two moralities to interpenetrate, the metaethical point that this master/slave philosophy is highlighting is this: "The moral discrimination of values has originated either among a ruling group whose consciousness of its difference from the ruled group was accompanied by delight – or among the ruled, the slaves and dependents of every degree" (Nietzsche 1966, 204). When it comes to the moral values of the slaves and those who are ruled, what is good consists of values that serve as, "the only means for enduring the pressure of existence" (Nietzsche 1966, 207). In the context of thinking about passive nihilism, Nietzsche enumerates some of the core values that are salient to a slave perspective:

> Probably, a pessimistic suspicion about the whole condition of man will find expression, perhaps condemnation of man along with his condition. The slave's eye is not favorable to the virtues of the powerful: he is skeptical and suspicious, subtly suspicious, of all the "good" that is honored there – he would like to persuade himself that even their happiness is not genuine. Conversely, those qualities are brought out and flooded with light which serve to ease existence for those who

[9] While Nietzsche's master and slave morality does not provide a comparative bridge to Dōgen's metaethics, it does help make sense of Nietzsche's idea of the will to power and the metaethical practice of value creation, which will be central to our comparative dialogue in Chapter seven.

> suffer: here pity, the complaisant and obliging hand, the warm heart, patience, industry, humility and friendliness are honored. (Nietzsche 1966, 207)

On the other hand, a master morality whose value system is determined by those who rule, "the opposition of 'good' and 'bad' means approximately the same as 'noble' and 'contemptible'" (Nietzsche 1966, 204). In his article, "The Internalization of Nietzsche's Master and Slave Morality" (2003), Steve Kirby notes that in response to the death of 'God' and the dawn of nihilism, master and slave moralities provided two orientations towards existence: an orientation that is anti-life, and an orientation that is life affirming.

> For Nietzsche, that which advocates and esteems humility, self-denial, pity and the intellect is opposed to life. On the other hand, that which promotes and encourages growth, strength, action, instinct, and the expansion and expression of power is held to be life affirming. Nietzsche contends that these two quite distinct worldviews are embodied in opposing set of values, which he calls 'aristocratic' or 'master' morality and 'slave' morality. (Kirby 2003, 16)

A key metaethical distinction between the master morality and slave morality which we will be examining in the next section of this chapter, as well as in Chapter seven when we bring Nietzsche and Dōgen in dialogue together, is that those who are masters are those who create values; "The noble type of man experiences itself as determining values; it does not need approval; it judges, "what is harmful to me is harmful in itself"; it knows itself to be that which first accords honor to things; it is value creating" (Nietzsche 1966, 205). For right now, we can simply highlight key psychological distinctions between these two moralities. In regards to a slave morality, such individuals live according to herd instincts and behaviors; "Inasmuch as at all times, as long as there have been human beings, there have also been herds of men (clans, communities, tribes, peoples, states, churches) and always a great many people who obeyed, compared with the small number of those commanding" (Nietzsche 1966, 110). On the other hand, those who are masters embrace independence and solitude; "Independence is for the very few; it is a privilege of the strong" (Nietzsche 1966, 41). Accordingly, from the perspective of passive nihilism and the herd instincts/cognitive biases of the slave, the morality of masters, and their independent spirit that allows for them to be creators of value, should be condemned:

> High and independent spirituality, the will to stand alone, even a powerful reason are experienced as dangers; everything that elevates an individual above the herd and intimidates the neighbor is henceforth called evil; and the fair, modest, submissive, conforming mentality, the mediocrity of desires attains moral designations and honors […] any high and hard nobility and self-reliance is almost felt to be an insult and arouses mistrust; the "lamb," even more than the "sheep," gains in respect. (Nietzsche 1966, 114)

However, from the perspective of the master, such condemnation on behalf of a herd-mentality is, despite being a popularly held belief, madness; according to Nietzsche, "Madness is rare in individuals – but in groups, parties, nations, and ages it is the rule" (Nietzsche 1966, 90).

Before we transition to the next section of this chapter, it is important to note that according to Nietzsche, one does not choose to be a slave, nor does one choose to be a master; rather, as Gertz notes, "who is a master and who is a slave is determined not by struggle but by birth, by who was born strong and who was born weak" (Gertz 2019, 42). Thus, in light of the death of 'God' so too, in regards to who we are vis-à-vis a slave or a master, there is no free-will to choose; according to Nietzsche, "in real life it is only a matter of strong and weak wills" (Nietzsche 1966, 29). From the perspective of one who has a strong will, the death of 'God' and nihilism as a cultural phenomenon provides an opportunity to ask ourselves, "What are the ideals in the present that we must oppose in order to create a future without nihilism?" (Gertz 2019 163). It is on this point that we shall focus our attention more closely, vis-à-vis Nietzsche's metaethics.

§1.8 *Language and Nietzsche' Metaethical Hammer of Self-Overcoming*

As we noted above, passive nihilism represents a pessimistic response to the death of god, and the loss of metaphysical, epistemological and ethical foundations (i.e. ascetic values); passive nihilism is a "recession of the power of the spirit" (Nietzsche 1966, 17). To begin making sense of how Nietzsche would respond to the question, "What are the ideals in the present that we must oppose in order to create a future without nihilism?" (Gertz 2019 163), we can start by considering the following normative statement he makes in *The Will To Power*: "These are the demands I make upon you – however ill they may sound to you: that you should call a halt to the moral impulse, which here demands submission and

not a critique, with the question: "why submission?" (Nietzsche 1967, 214). Nietzsche insists that we must begin by being critical; rather than simply follow the normative principles that society attempts to indoctrinate, we should engage in a metaethical critique (i.e. active nihilism) of the values and moral beliefs that expect us to surrender our 'will to live.' We should become, as noted in *Beyond Good and Evil*, "extra moral:"

> But today – shouldn't we have reached the necessity of once more resolving on a reversal and fundamental shift in values, owing to another self-examination of man, another growth in profundity? Don't we stand at the threshold of a period which should be designated negatively, to begin with, as extra-moral? […] We believe that morality in the traditional sense, the morality of intentions, was a prejudice, precipitate and perhaps provisional – something on the order of astrology and alchemy – but in any case something that must be overcome. The overcoming of morality, in a certain sense even the self-overcoming of morality - let this be the name for that long secret work which has been saved up for the finest and most honest, also the most malicious consciences of today, as living touchstones for the soul. (Nietzsche 1966, 45)

Nietzsche's metaethics as a self-overcoming of traditional values is the starting point by which any response to the aforementioned question will be framed; and, as we shall see, the practice of self-overcoming is itself its own goal. Indeed, I believe that it is in light of his philosophy of self-overcoming that we are able to understand how metaethical inquiry is fundamental to Nietzsche's philosophical practice. Rather than proffering action guiding directives, or providing an exhaustive analysis of the nature of virtue and the cultivation of such, Nietzsche is interested in getting us to discover metaethics as a practice for ourselves. As he states in *The Joyous Science*, "So far, no one has examined the value of that most famous of all medicines called morality, to which end one must first call it into question. Well, that is precisely our work" (Nietzsche 2018, 230). Unlike a passive nihilist, the active nihilist is one who has the courage to be critical in carrying out a metaethical inquiry into the nature of moral values.

One does not have to look too hard to find examples of Nietzsche's forceful critique and self-overcoming of objectivist/realist ethical theories. For example, in regards to the importance traditional theories of objectivism have attributed to our intentions, particularly Kant's categorical imperative, Nietzsche states, "we immoralists have the suspicion that the decisive value of an action lies precisely in what is unintentional in it, while everything about it that is intentional, everything about it that can be

seen, known, 'conscious,' still belongs to its surface and skin – which like every skin, betrays something and conceals even more" (Nietzsche 1966, 44). Or, more specifically in regards to cognitivism, the metaethical commitment that moral propositions can accurately or falsely describe reality, Nietzsche's philosophy of language in general, moral language in particular, evidences anti-realist and anti-cognitivist leanings. In regards to his philosophy of language, Nietzsche's perspective is novel as he believes that consciousness, and an organism's capacity for being conscious, is conditioned by an embodied capacity and need to communicate. As he states in *The Joyous Science*, "consciousness has developed only under the pressure of the need for communication – that from the very beginning it has been necessary and useful only between man and man (especially between those commanding and those obeying)" (Nietzsche 2018, 241).

Herein there are several takeaways to note. First, Nietzsche clearly believed that language, and our capacity to use such, is an antecedent condition for consciousness and cognition proper. Consciousness does not determine our ability to use language, instead, language determines our capacity and experience of being conscious. We will highlight this philosophical point again in Chapter five when we explore the nature of language according to Zen in general, Dōgen in particular. For right now, regarding this first point, we can see that language is embedded within the existence of organisms, such as *homo sapiens,* prior to their awareness of their ability to make use of such. The second point to note is that Nietzsche believed that the need to communicate was motivated, metaethically speaking, by a master-slave moral dynamic, which entails the following: (1) that all language, regardless of whether or not our propositions are 'normative', are fueled by values; and (2) the values that fuel our use of language flow from pre-reflective, pre-cognitive conditions that define our embodied existence. In regards to his philosophy of moral language in particular, in Nietzsche's "Epigrams and Interludes" from *Beyond Good and Evil*, he is clear that moral objectivism and cognitivism are untenable theories: "There are no moral phenomena at all, only a moral interpretation of phenomena" (Nietzsche 1966, 85). According to Nietzsche's perspectivism, our ability to realize different perspectives, yet never go beyond our

interpretations to objective facts or truths, extends to morality as well. While there is a plurality of moral perspectives by which one can experience the world, all of which are constituted by some dynamic relationship between slave values and master values, no perspective is free from one or more of the cognitive biases that shape our interpretation and evaluation of actions, behaviors and events. We can hear an echo of this hermeneutical point in Nietzsche's *The Joyous Science*, when he states, "When we see an image, we immediately interpret it with the aid of all the prior experiences we have ever had, in accordance with the degree of our honesty and fair-mindedness. There are no experiences which are not at the same time moral experiences, not even in the realm of sense-perception" (Nietzsche 2018, 127).

In short, all experiences entail some estimation of values that prevent one from ever arriving at an objective standpoint of truth; thus there are only interpretations and perspectives.[10] However, according to Nietzsche, no perspective or interpretation can accurately convey our thoughts about our experiences; rather, they remain ineffable. This point about ineffability is noted in *The Joyous Science*, wherein he writes:

> An insight came to me while I was walking, and I tried to capture it in the first words that came to mind so that it would not fly away again. But now it remains caught in these arid and inadequate words, waddling about in them, and has lost all of its original liveliness. When I look upon it now, I cannot imagine how I could have been as happy as I was when I first caught this bird. (Nietzsche 2018, 191)

In this passage, Nietzsche's words show how there are limitations in regards to our ability to use language to express thoughts and feelings, or describe reality. Thus, Nietzsche seems to be claiming that there is always something ineffable about our experiences despite our ability to use words to describe or express such; again in *The Joyous Science,* Nietzsche states, "Even our thoughts cannot be entirely expressed in words" (Nietzsche 2018, 167). And, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, he offers further analytical considerations about the nature of language and our limited ability to effectively use such by highlighting that, in a way that foreshadows Wittgenstein's philosophy of language in the twentieth century:

[10] Herein, Nietzsche's standpoint echoes Dōgen's perspectivism, which we will be exploring throughout this dissertation: "While we are experiencing one side, we are blind to the other side" (Dōgen 1994, 34).

> Words are acoustical signs for concepts; concepts, however, are more or less definite image signs for often recurring and associated sensations, for groups of sensations. To understand one another, it is not enough that one use the same words; one also has to use the same words for the same species of inner experiences; in the end one has to have one's experience in common. (Nietzsche 1966, 216).

Thus, according to Nietzsche, "the history of language is the history of a process of abbreviation" (Nietzsche 1966, 216); and, because all interpretations of facts are a result of our ability to use a particular language, it follows that all interpretations and perspectives are, too, mere abbreviations; they do not fully disclose what is real or true.

In regards to normative matters, language does not describe moral facts or properties, nor is it intended to. For Nietzsche, the words we use when we participate in a moral discourse and express value judgments serve as linguistic signs that refer to our affects, not mind-independent properties. In Part Five, "Natural History of Morals," from *Beyond Good and Evil*, for example, Nietzsche states:

> Even apart from the value of such claims as "there is a categorical imperative in us," one can still always ask: what does such a claim tell us about the man who makes it? There are moralities which are meant to justify their creator before others. Other moralities are meant to calm him and lead him to be satisfied with himself. With yet others he wants to crucify himself and humiliate himself. With others he wants to wreak revenge, with others conceal himself, with others transfigure himself and place himself way up, at a distance. This morality is used by its creator to forget, that one to have others forget him or something about him. Some moralists want to vent their power and creative whims on humanity; some others, perhaps including Kant, suggest with their morality: "What deserves respect in me is that I can obey- and you ought not to be different from me." – In short, moralities are also merely a sign language of the affects. (Nietzsche 1966; 99-100)

That language and thinking are nothing other than expressions of our affects and feelings is echoed in other works by Nietzsche, including *The Joyous Science*, "Thoughts are the shadows of our feelings – always emptier and simpler than these" (Nietzsche 2018, 154); and, in regards to the moral judgments that are formed by our use of language, Nietzsche states the following in *Twilight of the Idols*:

> My demand upon the philosopher is known, that he takes his stand beyond good and evil and leave the illusion of moral judgment beneath himself. This demand follows from an insight which I was the first to formulate: that there are altogether no moral facts. Moral judgments agree with religious ones in believing in realities which are no realities. Morality is merely an interpretation of certain phenomena – more precisely, a misinterpretation. Moral judgments, like religious ones, belong to a stage of ignorance at which the very concept of the real and the distinction between what is real and imaginary, are still lacking; thus "truth," at this stage, designates all sorts of things which we today call imaginings. Moral judgments are therefore

> never to be taken literally: so understood, they always contain mere absurdity. (Nietzsche 1954, 501)

Based upon these passages, we can now begin making sense of how to characterize Nietzsche's metaethical philosophy.

According to Brian Leiter, Nietzsche is an anti-realist. In his book *Nietzsche On Morality* (2002), Leiter contends that, "Nietzsche's central argument for anti-realism about value is explanatory: moral facts do not fit into the "best explanation" of experience, and so are not constituents of the objective world" (Leiter 2002, 148). In light of the many passages reviewed above, I am sympathetic with this characterization; Nietzsche does not believe that there are any moral facts, properties or objective truths. However, this still leaves open the following question: how should we characterize his standpoint on the nature of moral propositions and value judgments? As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, one can be anti-realist about moral properties and truths, yet still maintain that moral propositions are cognitive despite their erroneous nature (i.e. error theory); in short, moral propositions are useful fictions (i.e. fictionalism). In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche seems to defend this perspective when he writes:

> It is no more than a moral prejudice that truth is worth more than mere appearance; it is even the worst proved assumption there is in the world. […] Indeed, what forces us at all to suppose that there is an essential opposition of "true" and "false"? Is it not sufficient to assume degrees of apparentness and, as it were lighter and darker shadows and shades of appearance – different "values," to use the language of painters? Why couldn't the world that concerns us – be a fiction? And if somebody asked, "but to a fiction there surely belongs an author?" – couldn't one answer simply: why? Doesn't this "belongs" perhaps belong to the fiction, too? (Nietzsche 1966, 46-47)

Nadeem Hussain defends a fictionalist interpretation of Nietzsche in "Honest Illusion: Valuing for Nietzsche's Free Spirits," from *Nietzsche and Morality* (2007). Hussain argues that Nietzsche's metaethics is an attempt to rally his audience of free spirits to engage in a 'fictionalist simulacrum' of valuing whereby one is able to formulate value judgments while at the same time knowing that nothing is valuable in itself.

However, Maudemarie Clark and David Dudrick disagree with Hussain's interpretation. They proffer a nuanced interpretation of Nietzsche's metaethics in their article "Nietzsche and Moral Objectivity: The Development of Nietzsche's Metaethics" (2007). They argue that while Nietzsche's *Human, All Too Human* (1878), which is the main text that Hussain uses to develop his metaethical interpretation, welcomes a nihilistic interpretation of his metaethics as error theory, in *The Joyous Science*, Nietzsche's philosophical perspective takes a non-cognitive turn. They maintain that Nietzsche's non-cognitive leanings are compatible with the objectivity of some evaluative positions.

This nuanced interpretation is expanded upon in a different metaethical direction in Peter Poellner's article "Affect, Value, and Objectivity" (2007); therein he provides a cogent metaethical examination of affects, and their relationship to the 'phenomenal objectivity' of values. Poellner maintains that while Nietzsche is an anti-realist in that values are not metaphysically real; he believes that our conventional experiences have phenomenal objectivity in that the entities that are valuable to us are in some way 'subjectively real.' Accordingly, Poellner argues that affective states are the modes of experience by which we are acquainted with value, and that values are "essentially dependent on emotions and affective states" (Poellner 2007, 227). In regards to the 'phenomenal objectivity' of values, he argues that, "What is objective in this sense is what is standardly presented as pertaining to the (everyday, phenomenal) object, just as the visible, phenomenal color of a table appears as a property of the table itself, and not for example, as a property of an 'inner sensation' (Poellner 2007, 233).

Of these conflicting interpretations, which one, if any, is most compelling? As I noted above, I am sympathetic with Leiter's interpretation; anti-realism accurately captures Nietzsche's metaethics. However, I am not sympathetic with Hussain's fictionalist interpretation for reasons noted in Simon Blackburn's article "Perspectives, Fictions, Errors, Play," (2007), as well as Alex Silk's article "Nietzsche and Contemporary Metaethics" (2016).[11] According to Blackburn, it is hard to see how fictionalism

[11] It is important to note that Hussain is not the only scholar to interpret Nietzsche as an error theorist. David Emmanuel Rowe also defends an error theoretical interpretation of Nietzsche in *A Nietzschean Metaethics: Criticism of Some Contemporary themes in Metaethics* (2019).

would be able to explain Nietzsche's critique of Christianity, which was all-too-central to his overall philosophical project and perspective. Silk echoes this concern; he maintains that not only is the ascription of error theory to Nietzsche "undermotivated," the fictionalist "practice of honest illusions fails to capture Nietzsche's claims about value creation" (Silk 2016, 6). In regards to error theory, Silk contends that such an interpretation is insufficient for it would be anachronistic.

> The metaethical questions of principal interest to Nietzsche aren't semantic questions — questions about the conventional meaning of normative language. They are broadly metaphysical questions about the nature of normative properties. What Nietzsche is denying in the apparent error-theoretic passages is that there are attitude independent normative properties. Perhaps, in light of certain speakers' acceptance of attitude-independence, many normative claims have assumed a false and psychologically deficient view of the world. But this is insufficient for an error theory. One can accept a metaphysics on which nothing is valuable independent of agents' evaluative attitudes, while being neutral on the semantics of whether our linguistic conventions assume otherwise. (Silk 2016, 7)

And, in regards to value creation, Silk maintains that is unclear how a fictionalist metaethic is able to square with what Nietzsche believes to be a salient dimension of his philosophical practice, mainly the self-overcoming of old values, and the creation of new normative perspectives.

> Nietzsche's task is to transform reality: it is to "mak[e] things" valuable even though they aren't valuable "in themselves" (GS 299). It is puzzling why Hussain regards a fictionalist interpretation as well-placed to capture talk about value creation. Pretending to value doesn't create values any more than riding around cackling on a broom creates a witch. A fictionalist interpretation thus obscures Nietzsche's claims that there are values and that the new philosophers (in some sense to be explained) make this the case: "Whatever has value in the present world has […] been given, granted value, and we were the givers and granters!" (GS 301). Indeed, because of its commitment to error theory, fictionalism is inconsistent with these claims. (Silk 2016, 8)

For these reasons, Silk contends, and I agree, that fictionalism fails to capture the nature of Nietzsche's metaethics. As an alternative to fictionalism, Silk proposes 'constructivism'; "Constructivism treats normative properties as attitude-dependent […] it treats normative facts as grounded in facts about the (possibly counterfactual) evaluative attitudes of agents. Normative facts are nothing 'over and above' facts about agents' evaluative attitudes" (Silk 2016, 12). Herein, while I a sympathetic with Silk's use of 'attitude dependent', I find the label 'constructivism' hard to digest, mainly because it lends itself to metaphors that I don't believe Nietzsche would share. For example, when we think of constructing something, such as a post and beam barn, we are prompted to conceive of a foundation which will in turn

provide the architectural integrity for the entire structure. Herein, constructivism leads one to begin thinking about first principles which is anathema to Nietzsche's philosophical project. Moreover, the very term 'construct' seems, *prima facie*, to be undergirded by teleological values. For example, when constructing a building, there is specific goal in mind, and when that goal is realized, the construction is complete. Since Nietzsche resisted teleological value commitments, perhaps it is prudent to avoid the constructivist label so not to give the false impression that there is some final goal that one's efforts, vis-à-vis value creation, is looking to achieve.[12]

In regards to Clark and Dudrick's characterization, I don't find their interpretation to be any more compelling than that of Hussain's. While they are right that Nietzsche does seem to be an objectivist on some matters, such as higher and lower types of man, I don't think Nietzsche actually thought that conceptions of higher and lower types are mind-independent. To illustrate this point, consider Leiter's counter factual from *Nietzsche On Morality*:

> If it is an objective fact that Goethe is a higher type and, say, Hitler, is a herd animal, then the following counterfactual would seem true:
>
> (c) If Hitler had been like Goethe, he would have been better off.
>
> He would have been better off because he would have been a higher type, instead of a lower type – and it is an objective fact that the high are really high, and the low are really low. But this seemingly objective judgment – that Hitler would have been better off had he been more like Goethe – is a non-prudential value judgment; it is not a judgment about what is good for Hitler under the circumstances, but rather a judgment about what would make Hitler better off, but for his circumstances. In general, it seems that conceding the objectivity of "high" and "low" permits one to make objective non-prudential value judgments like: the good of the higher type is superior to the good of the lower type. (Leiter 2002, 151)

In other words, if we follow Clark and Dudrick's nuanced interpretation of Nietzsche's writings on metaethical questions and issues, we would have to accept the normative judgment that the good of the master is really superior to the good of the slave. However, this value judgment would certainly beg the question of how one actually knows that the values of the master are 'truly' superior to those of the slave?

[12] I contend that the term 'cultivation' rather than 'constructivism' is more fitting for thinking about Nietzsche's perspective value creation since it is not tied to any specific goal that is ever complete. For example, the cultivation of a one's vegetable garden is an ongoing activity from one growing season to the next.

After all, as we noted from his *Beyond Good and Evil*, the slave views the moral values of the master as evil, and so the normative judgment that the good of the master is really superior to the good of the slave must be defended by one who believes that they are a master, which is not a mind-independent judgment. "For these reasons, it seems important that Nietzsche's judgments of 'high' and 'low' do not turn out to be objective. […] The suggestion, then, is that Nietzsche be construed as an anti-realist about 'high' and 'low,' just as he is about all non-prudential value concepts" (Leiter 2002, 152). Herein, Leiter's criticism can be equally extended to Poellner's defense of 'phenomenal objectivity;' thus Poellner's interpretation, I contend, misses the metaethical mark as well.

But now the question we must ask is whether or not Clark and Dudrick's non-cognitive interpretation is compelling? Should non-cognitivism be included in our anti-realist interpretation of Nietzsche? I contend that if we follow Solomon's lead in regards to thinking about the nature of emotions and affects, then non-cognitivism is not an accurate characterization of Nietzsche's metaethics; nor is sentimentalism (which is a precursor to non-cognitivism), as Michael Forster argues in "Nietzsche On Morality As Sign language of the affects" (2017), hermeneutically helpful either. Based upon Nietzsche's writings, it is not obvious that he would share the same interpretation of feelings, emotions and affects as maintained by non-cognitivism and sentimentalism. For non-cognitivism and sentimentalism, there is a rigid distinction between emotions and reason; however, for Nietzsche, as he notes in Part Two "The Free Spirit," from *Beyond Good and Evil*, to think there is a rigid divide between any set of opposites, including reason and emotion, is due to our language, which is incapable to telling us what the world is objectively like.

> Even if language, here as elsewhere, will not get over its awkwardness, and will continue to talk of opposites where there are only degrees and many subtleties of gradation, even if the inveterate Tartuffery of morals, which now belongs to our unconquerable "flesh and blood," infects the words even those of us who know better – here and there we understand it and laugh at the way in which precisely science at its best seeks most to keep us in this simplified, thoroughly artificial, suitably constructed and suitably falsified world – at the way in which, willy-nilly, it loves error, because, being alive, it loves life. (Nietzsche 1966, 35)

For Nietzsche, both feeling and thinking emerge as manifestations of our will; more specifically, the will to power: "just as sensations (and indeed many kinds of sensations) are to be recognized as ingredients of the will, so, secondly, should thinking also" (Nietzsche 1966, 25). We will provide further treatment of the will to power in Chapter seven. For right now, my reasons for resisting a non-cognitivist characterization are two-fold. First, the fact that Nietzsche emphasizes the importance of the affects in his metaethical reflections does not entail that he is a non-cognitivist of the same rank as the twentieth century perspectives that emerged from the philosophical commitments of logical positivism. As we noted above, Nietzsche thought positivism to be motivated by ascetic ideals, which he did not share. The second reason is an extension of Solomon's nuanced interpretation of emotions from *True To Our Feelings: What Our Emotions Are Really Telling Us,* which avoids reducing them to mere feelings as he believes the twentieth century non-cognitivists do. According to Solomon, since emotions are tied to our understanding of the world and our situation within it, the non-cognitivist view is only partially right; "The emotion is already an assertion of a moral judgment, without which it would be unintelligible" (Solomon 2007, 207). I contend that Solomon's interpretation of emotion is helpful for making sense of Nietzsche's philosophy of the affects vis-à-vis moral beliefs and normative judgments; "Judgments already inhere in 'pleasure' and 'displeasure'; stimuli are differentiated according to whether or not they further the feeling of power" (Nietzsche 1967, 354). Based upon his account, perhaps our characterization of Nietzsche's metaethics as anti-realist should include anti-cognitivism, rather than non-cognitivism, and leave it at that; moral propositions do not describe moral facts nor express normative truths, but rather, reveal and/or conceal a perspective. To use a metaethical label that is tied to truth-seeking values that Nietzsche does not share will only confuse our understanding of Nietzsche, rather than clarify.

§ 1.9 *Chapter Summary*

In this opening chapter, we set out to familiarize ourselves with the general landscape of metaethics by identifying and explaining the differences between: (1) objectivism/realism; (2)

relativism/subjectivism; and (3) nihilism. In doing so, we were able to illuminate (3), nihilism, by fleshing out the differences between its extreme and weak versions: error theory and non-cognitivism. Based upon this general inquiry, we were then able to explore important aspects of Nietzsche's metaethics with the hope of clarifying where he stands in regards to the status of moral values and the nature of moral propositions. We began by inquiring into his perspectivism in light of the philosophy of the death of 'God;' this allowed us to see how nihilism is a cultural phenomenon with two orientations: passive nihilism vis-à-vis life-denying pessimism, and active nihilism vis-à-vis life affirming optimism. And, in the context of ethics, we saw how passive and active nihilism provide the psychological underpinnings for Nietzsche's slave morality and master morality. These distinctions, as we noted, are able to reveal how his perspectivism is oriented towards overcoming the herd instincts of passive nihilism/slave morality in order to create new values for the future of humanity. From this examination we were then able to inquire into how this perspectivism sets the stage for making sense of Nietzsche's metaethical commitments regarding the status of moral values and moral propositions. By considering his philosophy of language in general, we were able to see that Nietzsche does not believe that language can accurately describe or explain the nature of reality, and that this philosophical contention can be extended to moral beliefs as well; language is ultimately limited in its ability to convey or express moral truths. This inquiry in turn allowed for us to consider the important role the affects play in Nietzsche's philosophy, which thereby provided a looking glass for making sense of how to characterize his metaethics. After reviewing a number of metaethical interpretations from Nietzsche scholars, including Leiter, Hussain, Clark, Dudrick, Poellner and Silk, we concluded that while anti-realism is useful for characterizing Nietzsche's standpoint on the nature of moral values and truths, neither error theory, fictionalism nor non-cognitivism are able to fully capture the nuances of Nietzsche's perspectivism. Thus, when it comes to the status of moral propositions, we concluded that Nietzsche is anti-cognitivist; for Nietzsche, moral propositions do not describe or express mind-independent normative facts/properties or truths, but instead, reveal a perspective. In the next chapter we will begin setting up our inquiry into Dōgen's metaethics by

considering the different ways scholars have examined and treated Buddhist ethics through a comparative philosophical lens.

Chapter Two
Buddhism and Western Moral Philosophy

2.1 Chapter Overview

The goal of this chapter is three-fold: (1) to consider some hermeneutical issues concerning scholarly interpretations of Buddhist ethics through Western ethical theories and philosophical concepts; (2) to examine the different ways in which contemporary scholars have interpreted Buddhist ethics within Theravāda and Mahāyāna traditions in light of Western ethical theories; and (3) to explore the metaethical implications of the Mahāyāna philosophy of emptiness, specifically in regards to the problem of justifying conventional value judgments and normative expressions. In regards to (1) I situate my examination in light of Peter Harvey's cautionary point that it is unlikely that one will find a clear parallel between Buddhist ethics and Western ethical theory; a point that is echoed by George Dreyfus and William Edelglass. I then proceed to treat Damien Keown's virtue theoretical interpretation, followed by Charles Goodman's counter perspective of consequentialism, vis-à-vis utilitarianism. Accordingly, I plan to show the implications their interpretations have for applied ethics by reviewing the 'trolley problem,' which will in turn invite additional considerations of some alternative normative and meta-normative ways of interpreting Buddhist ethics, including André van der Braak's Nietzschean looking glass. Then, in regards to (2), I will explore the nature of Buddhist ethics through various Western philosophical categories including virtue theory, consequentialism, deontology and particularism; in addition, I will also consider some metaethical interpretations of the Buddha's normative teachings, specifically cognitivism as proffered by P.D. Premasiri. Herein our inquiry will begin with a review of early Pāli discourses and the ethical perspective of Theravāda Buddhism, and then move on to an examination of ethical perspectives within Mahāyāna traditions, specifically in regards to the philosophy of emptiness and the *bodhisattva* ideal. Finally, in regards to (3), I shall consider some critical metaethical reflections concerning the Mahāyāna philosophy of emptiness, specifically whether or not this non-essentialist philosophy completely derails conventional normative discourse and the epistemic capacity to provide a

justificatory account for everyday ethical prescriptions and proscriptions. Herein, my focus will be centered around the anti-realist philosophies of non-cognitivism, as treated by Bronwyn Finnigan, and fictionalism, which I consider in light of arguments put forward by Mark Siderits, Mario D'Amato and Laura Guerrero. In light of their perspectives, I bring closure to the chapter by considering Dōgen's metaethics as anti-realism. By reviewing Russell Guilbault's and Bret Davis' interpretations of Dōgen, I conclude that they succeed in explaining how Dōgen can justify normative judgments despite his commitment to anti-realism; mainly normative judgments are justified in light of the conventions (Guilbault) and the context (Davis) which they are expressed. However, that being said, I contend that conventionalism and contextualism only account for what normative expressions 'say,' not what normative expressions 'mean.' Notwithstanding their interpretations, I conclude the chapter by introducing the metaethical concept anti-cognitivism, which I stipulated as a characterization of Nietzsche's metaethics in the previous chapter. I contend that anti-cognitivism provides a sufficient account of what normative expressions mean, and thereby how they can be justified.

§2.2 Interpretations of Buddhist Ethics?

Within the scholarly forest of Buddhist ethics, Peter Harvey's *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics* provides a clearing into the multivalent beliefs that shape the normative world views of Buddhist traditions. As an academic touchstone, Harvey's research covers: (1) core beliefs and values taught by the historical Buddha and practiced by Theravāda traditions; (2) the adaptation of normative views within Mahāyāna traditions and schools; and (3) Buddhist applied ethics, specifically in regards to issues that pertain to the natural environment, economics, abortion, euthanasia, sexuality etc. By my estimation, Harvey's work is required reading for anyone interested in exploring the cultural diffusion of Buddhist ethics through the rich and diverse history of Buddhist texts, rituals, precepts and practices on their own terms. While he draws some comparative philosophical parallels between Buddhist ethics and Western ethical theories, he warns against thinking that Buddhist normative beliefs can be narrowly reduced to

theories such Kantian deontology, Aristotle's theory of virtue or utilitarianism (Harvey 2000).[13] Harvey reasons that:

> A key aspect of Western ethical systems is that moral prescriptions should be universally applicable to all people who can understand them. Buddhism, though, is generally gradualist in approach, so while it has ethical norms which should follow from a sense of sympathy with fellow beings (such as not killing living beings), others only apply to those who are ready for them, as their commitment to moral and spiritual training deepens (Harvey 2000, 51).

In other words, because the normative beliefs and practices that Buddhist practitioners maintain are dependent upon whether, for example, one is lay practitioner or monk,[14] Buddhist ethics is simply incompatible with the universalizability trait of normative beliefs that is salient to Western ethical theories.[15]

Other scholars echo Harvey's non-reductive outlook, yet for different reasons. In his article "Meditation as Ethical Activity" Georges Dreyfus notes that in comparison to other domains of philosophical inquiry, including logic and epistemology, "Indian Buddhist traditions never developed a similar systematic reflection on the nature of ethical concepts" (Dreyfus 1995, 30); and, while ethical concepts are used within different Buddhist traditions, they are not, according to Dreyfus, systematically studied and debated in ways that other issues are, such as the metaphysical status of the self (Skt. *ātman*).[16] Accordingly, Dreyfus maintains that when scholars approach the subject matter of Buddhist ethics with the hope of describing and explaining its nature, one ought not do so by making straightforward comparisons between Western ethical theories and Buddhist ethics, and then expect that

[13] It is important to note that Harvey does not consider metaethical interpretations of Buddhist ethics alongside these ethical theories.

[14] As Harvey notes, "The level of morality and general conduct of a monk or nun is expected to be of higher level than that of a lay person, because he or she has made the commitment to be ordained. Actions which would be totally unacceptable for a monk or nun, such as sexual intercourse, are acceptable (within certain limits) for a lay person" (Harvey 2000, 51).

[15] Harvey's hermeneutical position is echoed by Martin Adam's standpoint that Buddhist discourses, vis-à-vis ethics, presuppose different conceptions of agency in light of one's spiritual growth. See Martin Adam, "Groundwork for a Metaphysic of Buddhist Morals: A New Analysis of *puñña* and *kusala*, in light of *sukka*." *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 12, (2005) pp. 62–85.

[16] Richard Hayes echoes this point in his review of Charles Goodman's *Consequences of Compassion: An Interpretation and Defense of Buddhist Ethics.* See Richard Hayes, "A Review of Consequences of Compassion: An Interpretation and Defense" *Journal Of Buddhist Ethics* 18, (2011).

there will be clear and coherent philosophical parallels between Buddhism and Aristotelian virtue theory and/or utilitarian consequentialism. As he explains, such hermeneutical expectations will likely result in, "the imposition of an alien scheme of thought," upon Buddhist traditions (Dreyfus 1995, 30). This cautionary point is echoed by William Edelglass in "Buddhist Ethics and Western Moral Philosophy." Edelglass argues that while, "forms of Buddhist ethics share features with Western moral philosophies, especially virtue ethics and consequentialism," interpreting Buddhist ethics through one ethical theory does not provide, "An adequate theoretical framework for grasping moral thinking in any of the major traditions of Buddhism and, *a fortiori*, the vast and heterogeneously diverse tradition of Buddhism as a whole" (Edelglass 2014, 477-478). Thus, Edelglass maintains that a more fruitful understanding of Buddhist ethics will be realized if scholars explore different Buddhist traditions on their own terms.

However, other Buddhist scholars, such as Abraham Vélez de Cea, have a more optimistic perspective regarding the prospects of generating a comparative dialogue between Buddhism and Western ethical theories. In "The Dalai Lama and the Nature of Buddhist Ethics*,"* Vélez de Cea argues that since most moral philosophers are unable to critically examine Buddhist texts in their original languages, comparative philosophical studies are warranted so to prevent Buddhist ethics from being, "misunderstood and virtually ignored" (Vélez de Cea 2013, 502). Herein, Vélez de Cea is clearly not alone; a number of comparative inquiries have been advanced by scholars, including Damien Keown and Charles Goodman, in order to show that specific Buddhist traditions share the same normative and metaethical foundations that are championed by a specific Western ethical theory.

In *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics,* Damien Keown proffers an Aristotelian model of virtue theory[17] as an interpretive lens for making sense of the nature of Theravāda Buddhist ethics. According to Keown, there are clear parallels between Aristotle's virtue theory and the Buddha's teachings,

[17] Virtue theory can be contrasted with the action-based ethical theories such as the doctrine of double effect, Kantian deontology and utilitarianism, vis-à-vis the emphasis it places upon the cultivation of virtue and personal character so to secure a good life rather than performing certain actions and dutifully honoring certain rules.

specifically in regards to conceptions of the goal of the moral life, moral psychology and normative reasoning (Keown 2001). And, in regards to Mahāyāna ethics, Keown argues that while the doctrine of skillful means (Skt. *upāya*) resembles the principle of utility[18] in utilitarianism, he argues that Joseph Fletcher's situation ethics[19] is a more promising interpretative characterization of normative beliefs of Tibetan and East Asian Buddhist traditions (Keown 2001).[20] Ultimately, Keown's reasoning as to why Buddhism, both Theravāda and Mahāyāna, should not be interpreted through a utilitarian lens is that moral reasoning in Buddhism takes into account one's intentions and motivations independently from their 'utility.'

> In Buddhist ethics it is the motivation which precedes an act that determines its rightness. An act is right if it is virtuous, i.e. performed on the basis of Liberality (*arāga*), Benevolence (*adosa*) and Understanding (*amoha*). It is the preceding motivation (*cetanā*) which determines the moral quality of the act and not its consequences. In Buddhism, acts have bad consequences because they are bad acts – they are not bad acts because they have bad consequences, as a utilitarian would maintain. Moreover, for utilitarians motive is irrelevant whereas for Buddhists it is crucial. For utilitarians a good motive may be defined as one which produces an increase in the specified utility. (Keown 2001, 178)

[18] Also known as the Greatest Happiness Principle, the principle of utility generally maintains that the rightness and wrongness of one's actions is determined by the consequences, not the action itself. Thus, when one deliberates upon what they ought to do in situation X, according to Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) we should do that action which promotes the greatest amount of happiness for those who are involved in situation X. Herein, moral agents are to remain neutral when evaluating the interests of those who will be impacted by the actions they choose to act upon, including their own. Bentham's consequentialist philosophy is regarded as 'act utilitarianism' which can be contrasted with John Stuart Mill's (1806-1873) version of 'rule utilitarianism.' According to rule utilitarianism, when deciding how one ought to act in situation X, there are certain rules that they must honor when deliberating how to promote the greatest amount of happiness. Thus, unlike Bentham, Mill maintains that there are certain actions that one ought not do, and so, certain rules that one must follow when deciding how to act. For a detailed analysis of these consequentialist philosophies, see Russ Shafer-Landau, *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, 3rd ed, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[19] Situation ethics, also known as situationalism is often mistaken for ethical relativism. Contrary to ethical relativism, which maintains that there are no universal ethical principles, Fletcher's situation ethics contends that objective moral principles exist, however they ought to be applied differently depending upon the context of the situation (Pojman 2006).

[20] The main distinction, in so far as I can tell, between situation ethics and utilitarianism, specifically J.S Mill's 'rule utilitarianism,' is that while both theories champion the existence of objective moral values, and in turn recognize that the application of such should be determined in light of the situation at hand, situation ethics does not believe that consequentialist moral reasoning is the only way to decide which moral principle ought to be affirmed in order to do the right thing.

Thus, contrary to consequentialist reasoning,[21] Keown maintains that moral motivation (Pāli *cetanā*) in Buddhism, vis-à-vis normative choices, parallels Aristotle's faculty of moral choice, *prohairesis* (Keown 2001).

Contrary to Kewon's interpretation, in *Consequences of Compassion: An Interpretation and Defense of Buddhist Ethics*, Charles Goodman maintains that utilitarianism provides a more compelling conceptual road map for making sense of Buddhist ethics within both Indian and Tibetan traditions. One piece of textual evidence supporting this interpretation, specifically in regards to Theravāda Buddhism, is found within the *Mahāsattva Jātaka,* which presents a tale of the historical Buddha's previous incarnations whereby, as a *bodhisattva,* he offers his body as food to a hungry tigress who is too weak to hunt and provide food for her offspring. Herein, the motivating force for this altruistic action is compassion. Goodman contends that the moral lesson from this tale is that:

> Under some circumstances, I may be confronted with the option to sacrifice my own life to preserve some good that has, in the grand scheme of things, even greater importance. In that situation, consequentialism implies that I am morally obligated to make this sacrifice. No other Western ethical theory— not Kantian deontology, and certainly not Aristotelian virtue ethics— would endorse this kind of conclusion. Only consequentialism shares both the noble altruism and the frightening extremism of Buddhist ethics. (Goodman 2009, 54-55)

Accordingly, Theravāda Buddhism is, as Goodman interprets such texts, best understood through a rule utilitarian lens. And, in the context of Mahāyāna Buddhism, specifically Tibetan traditions, vis-`à-vis the *bodhisattva* ideal and the writings of Śāntideva (685-763 C.E.), Goodman contends that act utilitarianism offers students of Buddhism an effective interpretive lens;[22] "*Śāntideva* is much more similar to certain

[21] I contend that Keown's characterization of utilitarianism, vis-à-vis moral motivation and reasoning, is an uncharitable straw man. In other words, it is not obvious that a utilitarian is only motivated by utility; moral agents can have a plurality of different motivations tied to an array of values. For example, Nordic skiers can value the health benefits that one consequentially realizes over time, and also be motivated by the immediate phenomenological experience skiing affords. Thus, for Keown to say that utility is the only motivation a utilitarian can have is too simplistic; perhaps what he intends to argue is that, as a motivating force, utility ought to have overriding authority over other normative motivations.

[22] As I understand Goodman, since Aristotle's virtue theory does not emphasize altruism, Keown's interpretation does not provide a complete account of the altruistic nature of Buddhist ethics, despite the fact that Buddhism does value the importance of cultivating one's character.

act-consequentialist writers such as Peter Singer, who insist on the supreme moral significance of altruistic self-sacrifice, than to the advocates of virtue ethics and other versions of consequentialism who want to allow the individual some moral space to act in ways not dictated by universalist moral considerations" (Goodman 2009, 98).[23]

[23] Herein, it is important note that Richard Hayes is not entirely convinced that the horizon in comparative philosophy Goodman is opening up is helpful for understanding Buddhist ethics. In his review of Goodman's book, Hayes concludes, "Many philosophers will, it seems safe to predict, disagree with Goodman's convictions that Indian Buddhism is much better seen as a form of consequentialism than of a kind of virtue ethics, […] Therefore, one of the contributions that Goodman's book will make is that it will stimulate others to reply with counterarguments and to keep the debate moving along, thus keeping the field of philosophy alive for another few years. Many Buddhists who read this book may well wonder why it matters at all whether Buddhism subscribes to virtue ethics, character ethics or one of the flavors of consequentialism; […] While Goodman's book is philosophically stimulating and passionately argued, it has probably not provided a convincing case for what is gained by putting Western philosophical labels on the long tradition of Buddhists (most especially Mādhyamikas) who argued that putting philosophical labels on things is part of the problem, and not part of the solution" (Hayes 2011, 394-395). In regards to normative ethical theories, I tend to agree with Hayes. There are too many disparities, cultural and philosophical, between Buddhist traditions and the Western philosophical perspectives of Bentham and Mill. One clear distinction is that both Bentham and Mill were hedonists, albeit Mill advocated for a more nuanced conception of hedonism (i.e. attitudinal hedonism); and, in regards to metaethics, utilitarian hedonism is undergirded by objectivism/realism whereby pleasure and pain are equivalent to 'good' and 'bad, and cognitivism whereby our moral expressions refer to mind-independent truths. I contend that Buddhist ethics, specifically in regards to Mahāyāna traditions, does not share this metaethical perspective. Herein, I do think metaethics provides a more fruitful horizon for comparative philosophers, mainly because the concepts in metaethics are so general that they do not, in principle, attempt to specify why people, Buddhist or not, choose to act and behave in the ways that they do. For example, the concept of paternalism, which is a conceptual category in contemporary medical ethics, is not a term that was used by Hippocrates (460-370 B.C.E.), the founder of modern medicine, yet nevertheless, his general normative vision, vis-à-vis medical practice and physician-patient relationships, was paternalistic (i.e. physicians know best). However, while I do not find it problematic to use this label to characterize Hippocrates' normative vision for medical practitioners, I would not attempt to use this concept to explain his health recommendations for both preventative and restorative health practices; those practices can be explained on their own terms without having to emphasize that he believed that patients in general are not deserving of the truth, or are entitled to 'informed consent.' Accordingly, I encourage Hayes to consider the merits of comparative metaethical inquiry, vis-à-vis Buddhism and Western philosophy; after all, if one maintains that conceptual labels from one cultural time period cannot, in principle, facilitate understanding of culturally and historically distant religious perspectives, then that would seem to imply that one simply cannot examine and judge other cultures, which is a normative belief, not a hermeneutical given. In this dissertation, my plan is to demonstrate that one can explore Zen Buddhist ethics, vis-à-vis Dōgen, through Western metaethical categories while at the same time examining specific practices and normative beliefs on their own terms. More specifically, this inquiry will show that the reflective equilibrium between Western metaethics and Dōgen's normative writings makes room for the metaethical category anti-realism in regards to the metaphysical status of values; at the same time, I also plan to show, in light of Dōgen's writings, that when it comes to what normative expressions mean and what they say, like we saw in the previous chapter, none of the standard Western metaethical categories are helpful. Accordingly, I contend that the stipulation of a new metaethical concept, anti-cognitivism – is warranted as I maintained it to be in regards to Nietzsche's metaethics.

One way to highlight the differences between these two different interpretive models of Buddhist ethics is by briefly turning our attention to a popular thought experiment in Western philosophy: the 'trolley problem.'[24] This thought experiment has us imagine one person witnessing a trolley that is, due to mechanical failures, careening out of control and headed straight down a hill where there are five people on the tracks. These five people will inevitably be killed unless the individual who is witnessing this event pulls a lever, thereby sending the trolley onto a spur track where there is only one person who will inevitably be killed. Herein, the moral quandary this person faces pertains to the distinction between killing vs. letting die; is it, in other words, morally acceptable to pull the lever and kill one in order to save five lives, or, should one refrain from involving oneself in the causal act of killing (i.e. pulling the lever) and thereby let five people die from a causal event (i.e. the trolley careening out of control) that one is not responsible for, yet nevertheless culpable since they can act otherwise? According to Goodman's estimation, if the person standing next to the lever is a Buddhist, specifically a Mahāyāna Buddhist, then they ought to pull the lever since the consequences of saving five lives by killing one is more favorable than letting five people die. This reasoning would extend to alternative variations of this thought experiment, including pushing an obese man off a bridge onto the tracks in order to stop a trolley from killing five lives; again, better to kill one than to let five die. However, for Keown, though he does not promote a deontological interpretation of Buddhist ethics,[25] he does, as noted above, highlight the importance of motives and intentions when it comes to moral decision making; and, based upon the Buddhist precepts against killing, I suspect that he would argue that Goodman is wrong, and that the

[24] The trolley Problem was introduced by Phillipa Foot in "Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect" (1967) as a way to test moral intuitions vis-à-vis Western ethical theories. For an incisive journey into the history of the trolley problem and its different variations, see David Edmonds, *Would You Kill the Fat Man: The Trolley Problem and What Your Answer Tells Us About Right and Wrong*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).

[25] It is important to note that virtue theory offers no action guiding advice for dealing with the trolley problem. When it comes to moral behavior and moral choices, virtue theorists find inspiration from the stories of virtuous people. Thus, while the trolley problem can get one to begin thinking critically about their normative intuitions, and thereby shine some light on moral psychology, one ought not think that the trolley problem provides a complete account of the moral life.

morally preferred decision is to let five die rather than kill one.[26] I draw this inference from the virtue theoretical commitment that it is prudent to have some understanding of the actual lives that will be impacted by one's actions, specifically when one's actions involve taking steps that will knowingly hasten the death of another (i.e. intentionally killing).[27] Regardless of whether this inference is accurate, these normative theories reveal profound differences in regards to moral decision making, particularly in the field of applied ethics. For example, in regards to medical ethics,[28] if a Mahāyāna Buddhist physician were to follow Goodman's interpretative model, then it seems to follow that they ought not resist, in principle, the act of killing one hospital patient so that their organs can be harvested in order save five lives; however, if the physician were to follow Keown's interpretive model, such an action will be wholeheartedly resisted.

In addition to Keown and Goodman, other scholars have made contributions to the general pursuit of interpreting Buddhist ethics through Western ethical theories and categories. For example, Abraham Vélez de Cea's proffers a hybrid interpretation of Buddhist ethics, vis-à-vis virtue theory and consequentialism; Charles Hallisey defends a particularlist interpretation of the Buddha's teachings; Jin Y. Park provides an interpretation of Mahāyāna ethics in light of postmodern philosophers; and, André

[26] It is important to note that Keown does not include trolley problems in his writings on the ethics of killing in Buddhism. In his article, "On Compassionate Killing and the Abhidhamma's Psychological Ethics," though he challenges Abhidhamma's metaethical foundationalism, vis-à-vis intentional killing is always wrong, I do not think that his nuanced view entails pulling the lever in the trolley problem. Indeed, 'mercy killing' in the context of end of life decisions is quite different from the normative conditions one is confronted with in the trolley problem. See Damien Keown, "On Compassionate Killing and the Abhidhamma's Psychological Ethics," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 23 (2016).

[27] By defining killing as the act of taking steps to causally hasten the death of another it follows that letting die can be defined as avoiding to take steps to save lives. In other words, one ought not interpret one's decision not to pull the lever as an act of killing. Prima facie, it seems clear that killing is worse than letting die; after all, many of us are indirectly culpable of letting some people die since many of us could be engaged in saving lives rather than doing what we are doing, such as thinking through trolley problems or discussing the nature of Buddhist ethics. However, depending upon the situation, specifically in the context of terminal illness or an unbearable medical condition, one can certainly make the case that killing is preferable and that letting die is cruel.

[28] Peter Harvey provides a review of two topics in medical ethics in *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics*: (1) abortion; and (2) euthanasia. Both issues, as he notes, are very serious normative issues for Buddhists due to their normative views concerning killing, vis-à-vis karma. Thus, when one reviews Harvey's survey of the perspectives and policies for both abortion and euthanasia, particularly in South Asia and Tibet, it seems to warrant the inference that Buddhists do not view the world through the consequentialist lens championed by Goodman. I draw this inference from the fact that utilitarian reasoning has been, and continues to be, an important theoretical model for justifying abortion and right to die policies (e.g., Peter Singer's writings on bioethics).

van der Braak interprets Zen Buddhism through the writings and philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. Can the interpretations of these scholars inform us as to how a Buddhist should respond when confronted with the trolley problem, and its variations? While Vélez de Cea would likely have a nuanced position mainly because he recognizes that there are consequentialist aspects to Buddhist ethics, it is less clear whether Park and Van der Braak would be able to tell us whether a Buddhist should pull the lever or not. This is so, mainly because their interpretations are more in keeping with metaethics and not ethical theory; and, since continental thinkers such as Nietzsche would likely be suspicious of the trolley problem itself for the simple reason that 'Trolleyology' is too abstract and contrived (i.e. 'truth-seeking') to give an account of the 'way-seeking' moral life. In other words, the trolley problem reveals little, if anything, about what it means to live a meaningful life,[29] and the amalgamation of values that are salient to the continuous practice of overcoming of nihilism.

In addition to interpreting Buddhist ethics through Western ethical theories, some scholars have appealed to Western metaethical concepts and perspectives in order help make sense of what Buddhist traditions think about the metaphysical status of values. For example, P.D Premasiri has defended a cognitivist (i.e. realist) characterization of Theravāda traditions, which Keown builds upon; mainly, the values of good and bad are mind-independent natural properties that exist, and that we can know such through sense experience. In the context of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the Cowherds, which is a collective of *Madhyamaka* scholars, including Mark Siderits and Bronwyn Finnigan,[30] have illuminated the field of

[29] While normative theories, such as Kantian deontology or utilitarianism, can influence and help define one's conception of a meaningful life, conceptions of meaningfulness, such as Nietzsche's, are in no way bound to these theories; in fact, Nietzsche's writings reveal that he wanted to shatter them with a hammer. Moreover, while thought experiments such as the trolley problem are helpful for comparing and contrasting the doctrine of double effect, Kantian deontology and utilitarianism, it says nothing about the actual status of values, vis-à-vis realism or anti-realism, which is a central matter when it comes to ruminating upon questions about meaningfulness and purpose. Thus, when confronted with the trolley problem, one will not discover any philosophical perspectives concerning the meaning of life tied to the tracks, embedded within the lever or embodied within the obese man on the bridge.

[30] As we shall see, Siderits proposes fictionalism as metaethical characterization of *Madhyamaka* metaethics, while Finnigan entertains the possibility of non-cognitivism.

metaethics, specifically in light of the philosophy of emptiness (Skt. *śūnyatā*).[31] Based upon this non-essentialist philosophy, they have attempted to identify and explain what this non-essentialist philosophy entails for ethics in general, and one's ability, to provide justification for conventional normative judgments and expressions in particular. Outside of the scholarly pastures of the Cowherds, other Mahāyāna philosophers have added additional nuance to this comparative metaethical inquiry, including, Mario D'Amato and Laura Guerrero.[32] Finally, in the context of Zen Buddhism, which will be my focus in subsequent chapters of this dissertation, Bret Davis and Russell Guilbault have proffered metaethical characterizations of Dōgen's ethical writings. According to Davis, Dōgen's ethical writings, which pivots from the Mahāyāna philosophy of emptiness, reveal a 'contextualist' perspective; for Guilbault, Dōgen's metaethics, specifically in regards to providing justification of for normative judgments and expressions, is 'conventionalist.'[33] To get clear on these perspectives, let us now turn to closer examination of ethical theory and metaethics in the context of Theravāda Buddhism, which will in turn lead into assessment of ethical theory and metaethics within some Mahāyāna traditions, vis-à-vis, the bodhisattva ideal and the

[31] See *Moonshadows: Conventional Truth in Buddhist Philosophy*, edited by the Cowherds, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[32] As we shall see, Mario D'Amato also advances a fictionalist interpretation like that of Siderits, while Guerrero denies the tenability of such.

[33] Contextualism, generally maintains the following epistemic position: actions and expressions can only be understood in light of the context in which they are performed. Herein, it is important to note that while contextualism reveals an affinity with the anti-realist philosophy of relativism, it does not share the same perspective as cultural relativism or subjectivism. For cultural relativism and subjectivism, while it is not the case that there are any universal objective values that are real, they nevertheless maintain that the normative truths they identify with are in fact true. Based upon my understanding of contextualism, such a perspective does not go this far; instead, it simply maintains that we cannot, for example, understand why certain judgments and prescriptions are expressed independent of the context they are expressed within or in light of. Similarly, 'conventionalism' maintains that normative beliefs, and justificatory accounts for normative prescriptions and behavior are located in the society we live rather than a mind-independent world that is categorically divorced from culture. Again, based upon my understanding of this metaethical label, 'conventionalism' is not the same as cultural relativism as it stops short of advancing the metaethical claim that what is normatively 'true' for one culture is *de facto* true for it. Thus, it is important to bear in mind that both cultural relativism and subjectivism leave room for different perspectives which maintain that mind-independent values exist, whereas both 'contextualism' and 'conventionalism' do not. For contextualism and conventionalism, values are indeed more of a cultural artifact than cultural relativists think they are. Similar to the practice of bead making amongst early communities of *homo sapiens*, conventionalism maintains that justification for making beads in certain ways is not located in a mind-independent world, vis-à-vis bead-making truths; rather, the conventions of the community, and the context of their relationships is, according to contextualism and conventionalism, sufficient for providing such an account.

philosophy of emptiness. This will in turn set the stage for bringing closure to this chapter with a systematic review of the main interpretative models for making sense of Mahāyāna metaethics in general, Zen in particular.

§*2.3 The Buddha and Western Ethical Theory*

Though it is generally understood among scholars that there is no term in Buddhism that is directly equivalent to the Western concept of ethics, a number of models have been suggested for making sense of the moral life (Pāli *sīla*) in Buddhism, a life that is, according to Barbra Clayton, "understood in terms of propriety, specifically the good or proper conduct associated with awakening and awakening beings" (Clayton 2011, 284). In the *Majjhima Nikāya*, "The middle Length Discourses of the Buddha," the *Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta* supports Clayton's characterization of Buddhist ethics.[34] Students of the historical Buddha's teachings will find in this discourse an analysis of the Four Nobel Truths (Pāli *ariyasacca*) and the normative distinction between wholesome (Pāli *kusala*) and unwholesome (Pāli *akusala*) actions and personal character. In regards to the latter, unwholesomeness includes: (1) killing living beings; (2) stealing; (3) sexual misconduct; (4) malicious speech; (5) harsh speech; (6) gossip; (7) envy; (8) ill will; and (9) wrong view. These unwholesome ways of speaking, acting and viewing the world are conditioned by greed (Pāli *lobha*), hatred (Pāli *dosa*) and delusion (Pāli *moha*). Accordingly, in order to realize what is wholesome, the Buddha simply instructs his disciples to abstain from the various modes of unwholesome behavior and thereby cultivate a perspective, vis-à-vis "right view" (Pāli *sammā diṭṭhi*), that is not fueled by greed, hatred and delusion.

> When a noble disciple has thus understood the unwholesome and the root of the unwholesome, the wholesome and the root of the wholesome, he entirely abandons the underlying tendency to lust, he abolishes the underlying tendency to aversion, he extirpates the underlying tendency to the view and conceit 'I am' and by abandoning ignorance and arousing true knowledge he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view, whose

[34] For a succinct review of other discourses on ethics, along with a commentary, see Peter Harvey, "Theravāda Texts on Ethics," In *Buddhist Philosophy: Essential Readings*, ed. William Edelglass and Jay L. Garfield, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

> view is straight, who has unwavering confidence in the Dhamma, and has arrived at this true Dhamma. (Ñanamoli and Bodhi 2009, 133)

Thus, by cultivating 'right view' one thus realizes the four "divine abodes" (Pāli *brahmavihāra*) including: (1) altruistic joy (Pāli *muditā*); (2) compassion (Pāli *karuṇā*); (3) equanimity (Pāli *upekkhā*); and (4) loving kindness (Pāli *mettā*).[35]

The aforementioned ethical teachings of the Buddha are, according to Damien Keown, best interpreted and understood through the lens of Aristotelian virtue-theory. In *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, Keown argues that the *summum bonum* in Buddhism, particularly South Asian Theravāda Buddhism, is *nirvāṇa* (Skt; Pāli *nibbāna*). Since the attainment of this highest good provides the objective form and teleological function of the moral life for Buddhists, the nature of this moral life is, according to Western ethical theories, *eudaimonistic,* and thus best interpreted in light of Aristotle's theory of virtue.

> I believe that the formal characterization of *eudaimonia* provided by Aristotle can be applied to nirvana. Whatever nirvana is, it is indisputably the *summum bonum* of Buddhism and may be characterized, like *eudaimonia*, […] (a) it is desired for its own sake; (b) everything else that is desired is for the sake of it; (c) it is never chosen for the sake of anything else. This formal equivalence of *eudaimonia* and nirvana seems unexceptionable, and in fact involves little more than the conceptual unpacking of the notion of an inclusive goal. (Keown1992, 199)

Notwithstanding this comparative point, Keown also builds his case for Buddhism as virtue theory upon an analysis of the Buddhist term *kusala*, which he equates with the Western idea 'good'. More specifically, Keown defines *kusala* as, "those things which are to be pursued if enlightenment is to be attained. Its contrary, *akusala*, characterizes whatever is negative in this respect and is accordingly to be shunned. The Buddha unambiguously urges monks to abandon what is *akusala* and cultivate what is *kusala*" (Keown 1992, 116). The cultivation of *kusala* is itself the cultivation of those virtues or spiritual qualities, (e.g., the *brahmavihāra's*) that will promote *nirvāṇa*. Keown makes this point clear in order to

[35] The *brahmavihāra's*, also known as the "immeasurables," according to Peter Harvey, "when developed to a high degree in meditation, [..] are said to make the mind 'immeasurable' and like the mind of the loving brahma gods" (Harvey 2000, 104). Herein, loving kindness is the aspiration that all beings realize happiness, and compassion is the aspiration that all beings are free from suffering. In regards to altruistic joy, one experiences happiness through the good fortune realized by others; and, in regards to equanimity, one realizes the state of even mindedness.

distinguish his interpretation of *kusala* from that of utilitarian interpretations which have denoted it as "skillfulness."

> *Kusala* qualities partake of *nibbāna*, and their cultivation transforms an ordinary man (*puthujjana*) into an *Arhat*. Such qualities both reflect and promote the final good – they are virtues – and the most natural translation for *kusala* when used in the moral context is 'virtue' or 'goodness'. It is very common for *kusala* to be rendered as 'skillful', but it should be recognized that this translation carries with it a specific implication for the nature of Buddhist ethics, namely that it is utilitarian. Even then, it is a poor translation on aesthetic grounds, and we may note that utilitarian philosophers retain the traditional moral terminology of 'good', 'bad', 'right', and 'wrong'. (Keown 1992, 119)

Thus, according to Keown, the Buddha's teachings on the moral life emphasize the cultivation of character and virtue[36] rather than defending an action-based ethical theory[37] that emphasizes principles and rules.[38]

Notwithstanding this virtue theoretical interpretation, the Buddha's teachings on the moral life have also been examined through a metaethical lens as well. In his article "Ideas of the Good in Buddhist Philosophy" (1977), P.D. Premasiri notes that the idea of the 'good,' in the Anglo-American tradition of

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[36] While there are some general affinities between virtue theory and Buddhist ethics in general, it begs the question as to why privilege Aristotle's virtue theory rather than other versions of this "character-based" model of ethics? Dreyfus argues that while there is a virtue theoretical nature to Buddhist ethics, this 'nature' is, contrary to Keown's perspective, more in keeping with the Hellenistic thinkers, including Epicurus, Pyrrho and Seneca. "The goal of the Buddhist tradition, freedom from negative emotions, resembles that of many Hellenistic philosophers, freedom from disturbance. Moreover, like Hellenistic philosophies, Buddhist views emphasize the importance of certain virtues, detachment and compassion, which are both therapeutic and constitutive of the good" (Dreyfus 1995, 38). Notwithstanding Dreyfus' point, one could perhaps take this comparative inquiry several strides further into the eighteenth century, and thereby bring the virtue theory of David Hume into this comparative area of philosophical inquiry. Unlike Aristotle, yet similar to that of the Buddha, Hume denied the existence of an underlying self/personal identity. Based upon this common ground vis-à-vis the metaphysics of persons, one could argue that Hume's theory of virtue, rather than Aristotle's, offers us a more promising lens for interpreting Buddhist ethics, as well as addressing the broad question of how to do virtue ethics without an underlying self/agent.

[37] As we noted above, Charles Goodman disagrees with Keown's perspective; instead, he maintains that rule utilitarianism provides an interpretive model that is more in keeping with the Pāli canon. See Charles Goodman, "Theravāda Ethics as Rule-Consequentialism" In C*onsequences of Compassion: An Interpretation and Defense*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[38] It is worth noting that according to David J. Kalupahana, the historical Buddha would be skeptical of affirming a consequentialist standpoint, such as utilitarianism or deontology since both action-based ethical theories attempt to determine the rightness and wrongness of actions by ascribing a rule or principle independently of specific situations and circumstances. "The Buddha was not prepared to decide the rightness or wrongness of an action or a rule in itself. […] For the Buddha, the rightness or wrongness of an action or a rule does not consist in its situational or contextual validity alone, but rather in what it does to the person or the group of people in the particular context or situation" (Kalupahana 1992, 102). When we consider Dōgen's ethics in subsequent chapters, we shall see how his ethics parallels Kalaupahana's interpretation of the historical Buddha's non-absolutism.

moral philosophy has no direct equivalent in Buddhism, vis-à-vis *kusala*. Premasiri's definition of *kusala* is, "what is worthy of being pursued by human beings as an intrinsic good or as an end in itself" (Premasiri 1977, 356). With this working definition, which in turn, as Keown maintains, establishes *nirvāṇa* as the *summum bonum* of ethics, Premasiri argues that Buddhist ethics is best understood as a cognitivist metaethic. Unlike Western non-cognitivists who are quick to point out the divide between facts and values, Premasiri contends that no such division is reflected in the early discourses of the Buddha; "Buddhism does not seem to have made a distinction between fact and value" (Premasiri 1977, 356). Accordingly, Premasiri appeals to passages from the *Anguttaranikaya* and the *Kālāmasutta* to support his cognitivist interpretation of Buddhist ethics, vis-à-vis cognitive naturalism. He maintains that naturalism, rather than intuitionism, is in keeping with the fact that Buddhism, "does not reject sense experience in preference to a higher order of knowledge to be gained by means of rational intuition" (Premasiri 1977, 357). Similar to metaphysical and soteriological matters, it is by means of sense experience that we justify our moral beliefs.

> Unlike the cognitivist and objectivist doctrine of Plato, Buddhism does not seem to accept the metaphysical notion of a transcendental realm of Ideas in which the Ideal Form of the Good is to be discovered. One might mistakenly think that the Buddhist recognition of paranormal perceptions puts Buddhism on the same epistemological footing as Platonism. But there is clearly a difference between what the Buddha claims to know by means of paranormal vision and what Plato claims to know by means of rational intuition. (Premasiri 1977, 357)

Thus Premasiri is committed to a version of cognitive naturalism which basically states that the term 'good' actually refers to some ascertainable property, or set of properties, that objectively exist in the real world.

> Naturalism maintains that "good" refers to scientifically determinable relations between things. According to naturalism, the concept of the good can be analyzed in terms of some empirically ascertainable property or set of properties. Naturalism also attempts to explain the "good" in terms of human needs. According to teleological naturalism all things in nature are endowed with inner tendencies toward an ideal state and "good" signifies whatever is conducive to the attainment of that ideal state. (Premasiri 1977, 355)

According to Premasiri, as well as Keown, this particular form of naturalism – teleological naturalism – does not fall into the philosophical trap of the "naturalistic fallacy" wherein the term good is uncritically identified with some natural property.

In a related article, "Early Buddhist Concept of Ethical Knowledge: A Philosophical Analysis," Premasiri proffers an argument that he believes illuminates cognitive naturalism vis-à-vis Buddhist ethics:

> P1. Greed, hatred and delusion lead to actions such as killing. stealing, etc.
>
> P2. Killing. stealing etc. lead to unhappiness.
>
> C. Therefore. Greed, hatred and delusion are *akusala*, "unwholesome." (Premasiri 1987)

Herein, Premasiri is clearly attempting to naturalize greed, hatred and delusion, otherwise known as the hindrances that condition unsatisfactory lives (Pali *nīvaraṇa*). From this cognitivist interpretation, Premasiri claims that practitioners of the Buddha's teachings can know that greed, hatred and delusion are bad because they lead to unhappiness.

> In conclusion it may be said that the implication of the moral discussion recorded in the Pali canonical literature is that early Buddhism considered ethically evaluative statements as involving genuine judgments, which can be found to be true or false. In morals there is genuine knowledge to be acquired and this knowledge rests largely on empirical facts. In maintaining this position early Buddhism stands with the position taken by the naturalist philosophers (Premasiri 1987, 44).

Ultimately, Premasiri maintains that the discourses of the Buddha and his teachings on the moral life, because they are cognitive, are mind-independent (i.e. realism).

Keown shares Premasiri's metaethical interpretation of the Buddha's teachings; in *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, he posits the following metaethical conclusion:

> One important conclusion to be drawn from the Abhidharmic analysis is that virtues and vices – since they are dharmas – are objective and real. They are not part of the realm of mental construction (prajñapti), but are actually found within the psyche. This means that Buddhist ethics is naturalistic: good and bad are not abstractions to be apprehended by observers according to their various intuitions and sensibilities. Nor can morals be reduced to questions of taste or personal preference, as suggested by Emotivism. A final implication of this objectivisation of ethics is that relativism is ruled out: what is to count ultimately as good and bad is not determined by accidental factors but grounded in the reality of human nature. (Keown 2001, 66)

However, in *A History of Buddhist Philosophy: Continuities and Discontinuities*, David J. Kalupahana maintains that while the Buddha's teachings are best interpreted as the "middle path" between the duty-based ethic of deontology and the non-cognitive theory of emotivism, he does not specifically affirm a cognitivist interpretation.

> The Buddha's own proposal for achieving peace (*araṇa*) and avoiding conflict (*raṇa*) was the middle path, theoretical as well as practical. On the theoretical side, it was a middle path between view points. Thus, in epistemology, it was a middle path between absolutism and skepticism; in ontology, between eternalism and nihilism; in ethics, between deontology and emotivism. (Kalupahana 1992, 237).

In fact, Kalupahana resists the objectivist and absolutist metaethical commitments that are part of cognitivist philosophies; "The Buddha seems to have realized that if the moral life meant conforming to an absolute moral law that can override the good life, it could bring harm to human life. […] He therefore advocated a position in which human life could override the moral life. […] In other words, human life is not made for morals; morals are made for human life" (Kalupahana 1992, 101).

Kalupahana is not the only Buddhist scholar who resists characterizing Buddhist ethics with the aforementioned ethical and metaethical terms. Charles Hallisey, for example, argues that the theory of particularism serves as a fruitful interpretative model of *Theravāda* Buddhist Ethics. In his article, "Ethical Particularism in *Theravāda* Buddhism," Hallisey defends a particularlist interpretation of Buddhist ethics in light of Roderick Chisholm's problem of criterion. According to this interpretation, rather than approaching ethical teachings and customs of different religious traditions, such as Buddhism, with a theoretical method ready at hand in order to explain particular instances of moral behavior or specific moral teachings, we should start with some particular teaching or instance of moral behavior first, and from there, determine the method by which we can make sense of such. In doing so, he thereby characterizes any and all interpretative models (e.g., virtue theory and cognitivism) that attempt to unveil the nature of Buddhist ethical theory as Methodism, "since their concern has been with identifying the method by which Buddhists have decided whether a particular action or character trait is a good one" (Hallisey 1996, 38). The problem with methodism, vis-à-vis Theravāda Buddhist ethics, as Hallisey

argues, is that the Theravāda tradition is not monolithic as is evident through the diverse teachings and practices throughout South Asian Buddhist traditions. Thus it is misguided to think that we can employ a Western ethical theory as a method for understanding, with unifying consistency and coherency, the nature of Buddhist ethics. Rather than interpreting Buddhism as if it had a unifying theoretical method for approaching ethical matters, Hallisey proffers particularism as an alternative. This alternative, "has been called particularism by Chisholm, since it says that we recognize particular instances of knowledge even if we do begin with criteria that would justify our confidence that this knowledge is true" (Hallisey 1996, 38).[39] Particularism, in other words, claims that we start with some instance of knowing, and from there, determine the method by which we know. Thus, by moving away from conceptions of Buddhist ethics vis-à-vis virtue theory or cognitivism, particularism has the benefit of constructing a hermeneutical bridge that is sensitive to the rich diversity of South Asian Buddhism.

Before transitioning to Mahāyāna Buddhism, I would like to close the circle of this section by noting Keown's general response to Hallisey's charge that scholars will not find a meta-theory (e.g. virtue theory) for interpreting Buddhist normative beliefs. In his article, "Some Problems with Particularism," Keown states that:

> Theories operate at a higher level of abstraction and generality. Typically, they are formed though an intermediate process of casuistry whereby problematic situations of the kind found in stories are grouped and compared in order to derive moral principles. These principles are then ordered by moral theories, which seek to offer comprehensive explanation and justification as an aid in the resolution of similar moral dilemmas when they arise in future. Stories are thus the raw data from which ethical principles and theories are refined. Particularists, therefore, go too far in presenting the moral dilemmas in stories as evidence of Buddhists disagreeing over moral theories" (Keown 2013, 448)

The basic problem with particularlism, as I understand Keown's response to Hallisey, pertains to the stipulated conceptual boundaries for ethical categories, concepts and theories; particularlism, in other words, is too restrictive in regards to assessing and organizing the plurality of beliefs and practices which

[39] See Roderick Chisholm, *Foundations of Knowing,* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

are regarded with varying degrees of value and sincerity. "The challenge for any ethical theory worth its salt is to give a comprehensive account of all the features of the moral landscape that common sense tells us are important and to resolve dilemmas when moral principles come into conflict. A theory that cannot give a persuasive account of why we attach importance to a plurality of factors like intention, consequences, duties, and virtues would be a very poor moral theory" (Keown 2013, 450-451). Herein, I am in agreement with Keown on this point. While I don't think that the normative beliefs of Buddhist traditions are reducible to a single ethical theory as Keown maintains, I do think that meta-theories are helpful for making sense of the multivalent normative beliefs within Theravāda and Mahāyāna traditions. Indeed, without meta-theories, our ability to engage in cross-cultural philosophy would be radically crimped. Thus, while it is presumptuous to think that a meta-theory will distill the essence of Buddhist ethics, as if there were such an essence in the first place, they can, if used with hermeneutical care, help foster a comparative dialogue with other worldly perspectives and beliefs, and thereby allow for one to rethink and reexamine the web of beliefs they hold, along with the cognitive biases that all too often undergird such.

§2.4 *Mahāyāna Ethical Theory and Metaethics: Emptiness and the Bodhisattva's Path*

When one sets out to explore Buddhist ethics within the various *Mahāyāna* traditions throughout Tibet and East Asia, they will have to take into account: (1) the philosophy of emptiness (Skt. *śūnyatā*); and (2) the *bodhisattva* ideal, as presented in the "Perfection of Wisdom *Sūtras*" (Skt. *Prajñā-pāramitā sūtras*).[40] In regards to the former, the philosophy of emptiness is a non-essentialist philosophy that

[40] *Prajñā*, or "wisdom," refers to an ultimate (Skt. *paramārtha*) understanding of the reality, "which results from an investigation into the way things really are, what we might call 'metaphysical' understanding, the result of deep and sharp rigorous thought" (Williams 1989, 42). *Pāramitā*, refers to the "perfections" of the *bodhisattva*, including: (1) giving (Skt. *dāna*); (2) morality (Skt. *śīla*); (3) patience (Skt. *kṣānti*); (4) effort (Skt. *vīrya*); (5) meditative concentration (Skt. *dhyāna*); and (6) wisdom (Skt. *prajñā*). The *Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtras* were developed by the *Madhyamaka*, "Middle Way," tradition, sometime around the first century BCE (Conze 1999). The central philosophical doctrine within these texts is emptiness (Skt. *śūnyatā*). The *Vajracchedikā*, "*Diamond Sūtra*," for example, shows how the logic of emptiness (A is ~A ∴ A is A) shapes the vows of the *bodhisattva*, mainly to save all sentient beings while knowing that there are no sentient beings to be saved. "Here, Subhuti, someone who has set out in the Bodhisattva-vehicle should produce a thought in this manner: 'all beings I must lead to Nirvāṇa […]

denies the existence of individual self-natures (Skt. *svabhāva*).[41] And, in regards to the latter, the *bodhisattva* is a, "Being-for Enlightenment: one on the path to perfect Buddhahood, whose task is to help beings compassionately while maturing his or her own wisdom" (Harvey 2000, 123).

According to Peter Harvey, *bodhisattvas* were recognized in early Buddhism, and even still in *Theravāda* today, as heroic individuals who, "by a longer, more compassion-oriented route than that leading to Arhatship, sought to become eventually a full and perfect Buddha" (Harvey 2000, 123). However, in Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions, the *bodhisattva*, contrary to the *arhat*, is a savior being who postpones complete realization of *nirvāṇa* without remainder[42] and chooses to be reborn over and over again in order to save all sentient beings from suffering (Skt. *dukkha*), and thereby realize enlightenment collectively (Siderits 2007). The implications the path of the *bodhisattva* has in regards to ethics is significant; "In Mahāyāna, the concept of ethics (*śīla*) became broadened so as to be seen no longer as one component of the path; in the widest sense it encompassed the whole of it" (Harvey 2000, 130).

According to Charles Goodman, as noted above, what is significant about *Mahāyāna* ethics, vis-à-vis the *bodhisattva*, is that normative choices and actions are born out of consequentialist moral reasoning. Contrary to deontology, which maintains that the rightness of an action resides in the action

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and yet, after beings have thus been led to Nirvāṇa, no being at all has been led to Nirvāṇa. […] If in a Bodhisattva the notion of a "being" should take place, he could not be called a 'Bodhi-being' (Conze 1958, 56-57). The philosopher Nāgārjuna (150-250 C.E.), who is one of the early founders of *Madhyamaka*, and who is believed to have rescued the *Prajñā-pāramitā* teachings, "from the Nether world of the Nagas" (Conze 1999, 124), maintained that this philosophy entails "universal skepticism." As we shall see, this non-essentialist philosophy has profound metaethical implications for various traditions of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism. Notwithstanding the influence *Madhyamaka* had upon the development of these texts, it is important to note the *Yogacāra* tradition also contributed to the development of these texts through later commentaries.

[41] It is important to note that the *Mahāyāna* philosophy of emptiness can be interpreted either literally or figuratively. The *Madhyamaka* school of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism interprets this philosophy literally; all existing dharmas are empty of inherent self-nature, including the philosophy of emptiness as well (i.e. emptiness of emptiness). However, according to the *Yogācāra* school of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, a literal interpretation of emptiness entails nihilism; thus, *Yogācāra* maintains that the idea that all dharmas are empty should be interpreted figuratively (Siderits 2007). In *Yogācāra sūtras*, such as the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*, emptiness refers to the non-separation of subject and object.

[42] *Nirvāṇa* with remainder refers to one who has achieved liberation yet still has additional years to live, whereas *nirvāṇa* without remainder refers to one who achieved such and has died without the burden of having to undergo additional rebirths.

itself, the action-based philosophy of consequentialism argues that it is the consequences of our actions that determine the rightness or wrongness of a particular act; the ends, in other words, justify the means. From Goodman's perspective, there are a variety of reasons that support consequentialism as a valid interpretative lens into Mahāyāna ethics. In comparison with Aristotelian virtue theory, which maintains a position of "agent relativity" in that, "the flourishing of each agent involves the flourishing of the small group of people that the agent cares about," Buddhist canonical teachings in Mahāyāna, vis-à-vis the *bodhisattva*, emphasize "agent neutrality" (Goodman 2009, 20). The writings of Śāntideva (seventh/eighth century C.E) provide some evidence for this normative outlook.[43] For example, in his *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, "Introduction to the Practice of the Bodhisattva," Śāntideva states in Chapter eight, "The Perfection of Meditative Absorption:" "I should dispel the suffering of others because it is suffering like my own suffering. I should help others too because of their nature as beings, which is like my own. […] Without exception, no sufferings belong to anyone. They must be warded off simply because they are suffering. Why is any limitation put on this?" (Edelglass 2009, 397).[44] From the perspective of Śāntideva, it seems as though for one to maintain 'agent-relativity' is itself an indicator that one has not fully realized the philosophy of emptiness; this is so because 'agent relativity' entails dualistic distinctions that are contrary to the nondual philosophy of emptiness.

Another reason why Goodman champions consequentialism rather than virtue theory as a hermeneutical looking glass into Mahāyāna ethics is that there are a number of examples in Buddhist canonical teachings and narratives that are "replete with stories of *bodhisattvas* performing acts which do not appear virtuous" (Edelglass 2014, 483). Some *bodhisattvas* and *mahasiddha's* are reported to have routinely broken various precepts, including the precept against ingesting intoxicants or engaging in

[43] Śāntideva's philosophical perspective is born out from Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka school of thought. His works are studied primarily within Tibetan Buddhist traditions.
[44] For an incisive analysis of Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, see Stephen Harris, "Does *Anātman* Rationally Entail Altruism? On *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 8:101-103," Journal of Buddhist Ethics, 18, (2011) pp. 93-123.

sexual relations.[45] Their justification for this is "skillful means" (Skt. *upāya-kauśalya*); breaking the precepts and acting unvirtuously can be a skillful means for ameliorating suffering and awakening other sentient beings.[46] Thus, Goodman characterizes Buddhist ethics as character-consequentialism, which, unlike other versions of consequentialism, emphasizes the cultivation of virtue for the benefit of promoting happiness for others (Goodman 2009). This interpretive model recognizes that sometimes compromising our personal character and acting unvirtuously is good, if it will yield favorable results in the form of promoting happiness and ameliorating the sufferings of others.

While Goodman's reasoning is incisive, not all scholars are convinced that his interpretations of Mahāyāna ethics is accurate. Abraham Vélez de Cea challenges Goodman's consequentialist characterization of Buddhist ethics in his article, "The Dalai Lama and the Nature of Buddhist Ethics." Therein, Vélez de Cea supports Keown's virtue theoretical leanings by defending a model of Buddhist ethics he calls "pluralistic virtue theory." Herein, Velez de Cea's characterization of Buddhist ethics is framed in light of the ethical writings and teachings of the Dalai Lama, who is believed to be the incarnation of the *bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara*, into a comparative dialogue with Christine Swanton's pluralistic approach to virtue theory.[47] While Vélez de Cea recognizes that there are differences in their accounts and characterizations of the moral life, he nevertheless argues that there are some striking affinities between the Dalai Lama and Swanton which demonstrate that Buddhism is not consequentialist, as Goodman contends; "the Dalai Lama's ethics includes consequentialist considerations, but it cannot be

[45] See Keith Dowman, *Masters of Mahamudra: Songs and Histories of the Eight-Four Buddhist Siddhas*, (Albany: State University Press of New York, 1985).

[46] In *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics* (2000), Peter Harvey notes that while the doctrine of skillful means allows for greater normative flexibility, vis-à-vis the precepts, within *Mahāyāna* traditions, it is not the case that such flexibility is completely absent from *Theravāda*. That being said, there are number of examples in *Mahāyāna* texts that provide philosophical justification for the doctrine of skillful means. For example, "Śāntideva's *Śikṣā-samuccaya* cites the *Candra-pradīpa Sūtra* to the effect that where the motive is to help people, there is no fault in an action (*Ss*. 163). The *Akṣayamati Sūtra* is also cited as saying 'At the time for giving once can overlook the practice of morality and so forth. But for all that he must not be lax' (*Ss*. 12)" (Harvey 2000, 135). According to Harvey, there is no single standard or criterion for determining how much flexibility *bodhisattvas* should be afforded when performing skillful acts since, "*Mahāyāna* texts differ on the degree of permissiveness allowed to *Bodhisattvas*" (Harvey 2000, 135).

[47] See Christine Swanton, *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

reduced to consequentialism, either in general, or when facing ethical dilemmas" (Vélez de Cea 2013, 522). Thus, Vélez de Cea maintains, "Overall, the Dalai Lama's ethical theory is irreducible to clear-cut versions of consequentialism, deontological, or Aristotelian virtue ethics. In order to capture the unique complexity of the Dalai Lama's ethics, it may be helpful to characterize it as a pluralistic approach to virtue ethics." (Vélez de Cea 2013, 535)

Now, if we shift our focus away from Tibetan Buddhism towards East Asian *Mahāyāna* traditions, the relationship between the philosophy of emptiness and the *bodhisattva* ideal does not line up with Vélez de Cea's interpretation. For example, according to Jin Park, in the "Essentials On Observing and Violating the Fundamentals of *Bodhisattva* Precepts," the Korean monk Wŏnhyo (617-686) shows that, "Ethical standards created through *bodhisattva* precepts cannot be an exception from the fact that things do not have self-nature. By underscoring the true nature of precepts as empty, Wŏnhyo demonstrates the provisonality as well as the vulnerability of the border lines that define ethical categories" (Park 2009 409-410).[48] For example, Wŏnhyo states:

> Precepts do not have self-nature; they are always created through other conditions. Hence it is said that there are conditions. When the conditions are mentioned, this does not indicate that something exists to become the cause of precepts; instead it means that things arise through causes. Hence it is said that causes are not inexistent. The nature of precepts whose causes are

[48] It is important note that Wŏnhyo's philosophy of emptiness is born out from Chinese Mahāyāna traditions, including *Hua-Yen* and *T'ien-t'ai*; his philosophy is couched within *Tathāgatagarbha* theory vis-à-vis the *Awakening of Faith*, (Williams 1989). According to Yoshito S. Hakeda, "*Awakening of Faith* may be regarded as representing the highest point in the development of the *Tathāgatagarbha* concept in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism" (Hakeda 1967, 15). One of the central teachings of this text is the two aspects of "One Mind": (1) the aspect of enlightenment; and (2) the aspect of non-enlightenment (Williams 1989). "The revelation of the true meaning [of the principle of *Mahāyāna* can be achieved] by [unfolding the doctrine] that the principle of One Mind has two aspects. One is the aspect of Mind in terms of the Absolute (*tathatā*; Suchness), and the other is the aspect of Mind in terms of phenomena (*saṃsāra*; birth and death). Each of these two aspects embraces all states of existence. Why? Because these two aspects are mutually inclusive" (Hakeda 1967, 31). Herein, the "Absolute" is foundational for making sense of the idea of "original enlightenment" (Jpn. *hongaku*) in medieval Japanese Buddhist thought, including Dōgen, as we shall see in the next chapter. For example, "The essence of Mind is free from thoughts. The characteristic of that which is free from thoughts is analogous to that sphere of empty space that pervades everywhere. The one [without any second, i.e., the absolute] aspect of the World of Reality (*dharmadhātu*) is none other than undifferentiated Dharmakaya, the 'Essence-body' of the Tathāgata. [Since the essence of Mind is] grounded in Dharmakaya, it is to be called original enlightenment. Why? Because 'original enlightenment' indicates [the essence of Mind (*a priori*)] in contradistinction to [the essence of Mind in] the process of actualization of enlightenment; the actualization of enlightenment is none other than [the process of integrating] the identity with the original enlightenment" (Hakeda 1967, 37).

> not inexistent is neither material reality nor thoughts in one's mind. Hence, it is said that precepts are neither form nor the mind. Even though they are neither form nor the mind, the precepts cannot be attained if separated from either form or the mind. Even though precepts cannot be attained, this does not mean that they do not exist. Hence it is said that precepts are neither being nor nonbeing. (Park 2009, 417)

Emptiness, as Park notes, is salient to the moral life for East Asian *Mahāyāna* Buddhists; "the practitioner must understand the nonsubstantial nature of precepts. Violation of the precepts does not have a substantial reality" (Park 2009, 410-411). This normative perspective, which seems to resist being pigeonholed into a Western ethical theory such as those proffered by Keown, Goodman and Vélez de Cea, invites alternative interpretations, including perspectives of Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas.[49] According to Park:

> The nonduality of form (phenomena) and emptiness (noumenon) is the ground of Mahāyāna Buddhist Philosophy. When this idea is applied to ethics, it cannot but destabilize conventional ethical discourse. Wŏnhyo's discussion of bodhisattva precepts problematizes the basic assumptions of normative ethics. It problematizes ethical categories by showing the provisional nature of precepts and revealing the limits of binary oppositions commonly employed in ethical discourse. By so doing, Wŏnhyo reconceptualizes the function of ethics. (Park 2009, 412)

Indeed, Wŏnhyo's normative outlook, vis-à-vis problematizing essentialist assumptions and binary concepts, which I interpret as a pivot towards doing metaethics, is not unique to his perspective singly. In *Chan* (Jpn. Zen) for example, similar normative leanings are revealed within the writings and sayings of both the *Linji* (Jpn. *Rinzai*) and *Caodong* (Jpn. *Sōtō*) traditions.

Huang Po (d. 850), a *Chan* master and predecessor to the *Linji* lineage, promoted the doctrine of *tathāgatagarbha,* Buddha-nature, and the philosophy of "One Mind," which he maintains is no mind at all (Blofeld 1958). Accordingly, when considering ethical concepts such as good and evil, vis-à-vis karma, he maintains that they condition grasping and attachment, which in turn occludes realization of "One Mind."

> The building up of good and evil both involve attachment to form. Those who, being attached to form, do evil, have to undergo various incarnations unnecessarily; while those who, being attached to form, do good, subject themselves to toil and privation equally to no purpose. In either case it is better to achieve sudden self-realization and to grasp the fundamental Dharma.

[49] See Jin Park, *Buddhism and Postmodernity Ethics: Zen, Hua Yen and the Possibility of a Buddhist Postmodern Ethics* (New York: Rowman Littlefield, 2008).

> This Dharma is Mind, beyond which there is no Dharma; and this Mind is the Dharma, beyond which there is no mind. Mind in itself is not mind, yet neither is no-mind. (Blofeld 1958, 34)

As Dale S. Wright explains in *Philosophical Meditations on Zen Buddhism*, Huang Po maintained, "that the intention of Buddhism is to 'arrest the karma-forming process of conceptual thought'" (Wright 1998, 174). Accordingly, in the context of the *Mahāyāna* idea of *prajñā*, which he characterizes as "intuitive knowledge," Huang Po believed that dualistic thinking and concepts undermine one's ability to directly experience "reality;" thus, "the essential element of Huang Po's Zen practice must be 'throwing off the burden of concepts'" (Wright 1998, 175). Herein, the implications of this Zen perspective, vis-à-vis ethics, is that any normative perspective that relies upon dualistic concepts or principles will be defeating for practitioners.

Hans-Georg Moeller champions this 'beyond good and evil' perspective in *The Moral Fool: A Case for Amorality* (2010). One of his main arguments is that since morality is defined by dualisms (e.g. good and bad, right and wrong), and because all dualisms cloud one's insight and authentic participation with the non-dual nature of all things, it follows that morality is not helpful for Zen practice.

> "Do not think good, do not think evil" is the advice that is given to the Zen Buddhist practitioner. A variation of this phrase is found in Dazhu Huihai's (late eighth/early ninth century CE) *Dunwu rudao yaomen lun*: "Thinking in terms of good and evil is wrong; not to think so is right thinking. The same applies to all other categories of opposites – sorrow, and joy, beginning and end, acceptance and rejection, dislikes and likes, aversion and love, all of which are called wrong thinking, while to abstain from thinking in those categories is called right thinking." Thinking here refers to the activity of the mind during meditation – and by extension, of the enlightened person who no longer suffers. This state of mind is not so different from that of the moral fool in Daoism. One simply refrains from attaching substantial value judgments to one's perceptions, and a prime value judgment is obviously moral judgment. (Moeller 2009, 58)

Indeed, this 'beyond good and evil' interpretation of Zen helps frame the anti-realist characterization of Dōgen's ethics I advance in subsequent chapters, as well the comparative dialogue between Dōgen and Nietzsche I create in Chapter seven. Why Dōgen and Nietzsche? Following Masao Abe's lead in "Zen and Nietzsche," from *Zen and Western Thought*,[50] it is their perspectivism that makes them companions

[50] In addition to Abe, Graham Parkes has also helped set the stage Zen and Nietzsche comparative research. See Graham Parkes, *Nietzsche and Asian Thought*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

on a 'way-seeking' path; like Nietzsche's perspectivism, which we explored in Chapter one, "This idea that the value of the world lies in our interpretations, and that there is no world apart from our value-interpretations, is not essentially different from Buddhism and the Zen standpoint which holds that everything arises from the discriminating mind. For when there is discrimination, value interpretation is involved" (Abe 1985, 139). More recently, in his book *Nietzsche and Zen: Self-Overcoming Without a Self*, André van der Braak generates a comparative dialogue between Zen and Nietzsche in light of their "way seeking" practice of philosophy, vis-à-vis "self-overcoming."

> Self-overcoming is one of the most important notions in Nietzsche's philosophy. For Nietzsche, life, conceived as will to power, is that which continually overcomes itself. Also, as an individual, it is in one's very nature as a creature of will to power that one must continually overcome oneself. […] Nietzsche speaks about the self-overcoming of life, morality and Christianity. […] Also the Zen tradition stresses, like Buddhism in general, the importance of self-overcoming in order to reach awakening or enlightenment. But Zen stresses that enlightenment is non-teleological; it vehemently criticizes early Buddhist conceptions of enlightenment as a goal to be reached. For Zen, self-overcoming is also without a self. (Van der Braak 2011, 25-26)

According to Van der Braak, the process of self-overcoming in Nietzsche's philosophy, and self-overcoming without a self in Buddhism and Zen, is an all-too-salient aspect of the moral life whereby one revaluates all values. In the Zen tradition, Dōgen is one case in point.

> At first sight, it would seem that a dialogue with Zen has little to offer in interpreting Nietzsche's revaluation of all values. In the Zen tradition, there is nothing to be found that corresponds to it – not surprisingly, since Nietzsche's revaluation is closely connected to the crisis of nihilism that he diagnoses in Western culture. However, in this study we have seen that Dōgen, for example, could be seen as engaging in a continuous Buddhist revaluation of values: and revaluing the notion of Buddha nature, revaluing the oppositions of values: and enlightenment, practice and realization, and zazen and ordinary life. (Van der Braak 2011, 180)

Ultimately, what is central to Van der Braak's comparative inquiry, as well as the other conceptual bridges constructed between Western continental thinkers and East Asian Buddhism, is that the Mahāyāna philosophy of emptiness overturns, as Jin Park points out, conventional moral beliefs and theories. Thus, as we now turn towards a systematic assessment of current developments in Mahāyāna metaethics, we shall see how the non-essentialist philosophy of emptiness (Skt. *śūnyatā*) is pivotal for understanding the nature of Dōgen's metaethics.

§*2.5 Mahāyāna Metaethics: Emptiness and Values*

While the philosophy of emptiness tends to destabilize traditional ethical theories that emphasize dualistic normative concepts, it does not do the same to metaethical inquiry. This is so mainly because metaethics makes room for moral skepticism and non-essentialist views, such as anti-realism. To begin making sense of Mahāyāna metaethics more systematically, let's turn our attention to Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, specifically the final verse in the "Analysis of Views:" "I salute Gautama, who, based on compassion, taught the true Dharma for the abandonment of all views" (Siderits and Katsura 2013, 334). In their commentary on this verse, Siderits and Katsura state that "all views" refers to, "any theory concerning how things ultimately are" (Siderits and Katsura 2013, 334). In other words, for the purposes of our inquiry, "all views" includes normative beliefs about good and bad, right and wrong. What this means for metaethics is that the philosophy of emptiness is clearly incompatible with realist and cognitivist standpoints. Since realism believes that values are objective/mind-independent, and because cognitivism believes that language can accurately describe and express such values and principles, these metaethical leanings directly clash with Nāgārjuna's *Madhyamaka* standpoint whereby emptiness reveals that nothing has an inherent mind-independent nature, and that there is ultimately nothing one can describe or express. However, that being said, the question remains as to whether the philosophy of emptiness permits or forestalls conventional ethical discourse? In other words, in light of the two-fold theory of truth in *Madhyamaka*, conventional truth (Skt. *saṃvṛiti-satya*) and ultimate truth (Skt. *paramārtha-satya*), while it may be the case that there is nothing that can be said about ethics in an ultimate sense, is it possible to provide justificatory support from a conventional standpoint?[51]

[51] It is important to note that not all scholars are comfortable with an anti-realist interpretation of *Madhyamaka* metaethics. See Gordon F. Davis, "Moral Realism and Anti-Realism outside the West: A Meta-Ethical Turn in Buddhist Ethics," *Comparative Philosophy*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2013) pp. 24-53. In addition, see ibid., "The *Antipada* Problem in Buddhist Meta-Ethics," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 25 (2018) pp. 185-231. In short, Davis maintains that Buddhist scholars, particularly the Cowherds, have over stepped the Buddhist middle way approach to philosophizing by endorsing anti-realism as metaethical off shoot of the philosophy of emptiness (Davis 2018). Moreover, he argues that it is hard to square anti-realist interpretations with Buddhism's commitment to universal compassion (Davis 2013). In short, I am not sympathetic with Davis' position. In regards to over stepping the Buddhist middle way, Davis seems to assume that the middle way should be between absolutism and anti-realism. I

Bronwyn Finnigan takes up this question in her article, "*Madhyamaka* Buddhist Meta-Ethics: The Justificatory Grounds of Moral Judgments." Therein Finnigan asks, "Can *Madhyamaka* provide a satisfactory justificatory basis for these Buddhist ethical views given its particular analyses of metaphysics and taking into account the differences in epistemological commitments that distinguish *Prāsaṅgika* and *Svātantrika Madhyamaka*?" (Finnigan 2015, 765).[52] Tom Tillemans,[53] for example, thinks that *Madhyamakas* can find a justificatory basis grounded in conventional intuitions. However, according to Finnigan, the reasons supporting Tillemans position are, despite their validity, unsound due to exegetical and philosophical reasons. The central focus of Finnigan's article is to expand upon the philosophical line of reasoning advanced by Finnigan and Tanaka in "Ethics for *Mādhyamikas*," from *Moonshadows: Conventional Truth in Buddhist Philosophy*.

> Whether Mādhyamikas can justify the general and fundamental moral judgments from which evaluative conclusions about particular actions are derived. That compassion, for example, is judged as good and suffering as bad are, in general, fundamental assumptions that inform much Buddhist ethical reasoning about whether particular actions count as good or bad, right or wrong…Given its metaphysical and epistemological assumptions, can *Madhyamaka* provide a satisfactory justificatory base for these most fundamental Buddhist moral judgments? (Finnigan 2015, 766-767)

By considering a range of metaethical positions that *Madhaymaka* might adopt, including intuitionism and cognitive naturalism, Finnigan introduces the possibility of interpreting *Madhayamaka* as non-cognitivist. While there are a number of important points that we can address within this article as a

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contend that this is mistaken. Instead, the middle way of *Madhyamaka* is, in general, neither being nor non-being, or, neither eternalism nor annihilationism. In the context of metaethics, this middle way translates into neither moral absolutism nor amoralism. While anti-realism is not a mean between these extremes, it does fall in between them by: (1) denying the existence of absolute normative truths and/or mind-independent values; and (2) preserving anthropogenic normative views and perspectives. And, in regards to his point about universal compassion, it is not obvious to me that Buddhist compassion is born out of a mind-independent facts or truths; nor is it obvious that the way Buddhists express their compassion for other beings is universal in nature, and thus not dependent upon context of the situation at hand.

[52] *Madhyamaka*, "middle way," is a school of Buddhist philosophy that was founded by Nāgārjuna in the first century, CE, which was influential within the development of Mahāyāna Buddhism, including Zen. As a school of philosophy, *Madhyamaka* consists of two main traditions: 1) *Prāsangika*, or Consequence school; 2) *Svātantrika*, or Autonomy school. A central philosophical distinction between these two schools is that while the former adopts a philosophical strategy of critically challenging the philosophical its opponents by showing how their views lead to undesired consequences, the latter school attempts to establish a positive philosophical thesis of its own.

[53] See Tom Tillemans: "Madhyamaka Buddhist Ethics." *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 33, nos. 1–2 (2010) pp. 359–381.

whole, her reflections on the prospects of a non-cognitive interpretation will help set the stage for our treatment of Dōgen's metaethics.

Is it possible that a non-cognitivist metaethic could coherently provide justification for conventional value judgments and normative expressions that make up so much of the everyday world? Finnigan considers this possibility in light of the hurdles facing non-cognitivism, including the Frege-Geach problem that we discussed in the previous chapter. As a theory of anti-realism, Finnigan suggests the following:

> If we were to accept a non-cognitivist analysis of moral judgments, it could be that what has been causing all of our difficulties is the fact that we have been giving a metaphysical treatment to the question of their justificatory status. More precisely, we have been looking to conventional truth to provide some factual basis on which to justify the moral claims found in Madhyamaka philosophical texts on the assumption that these claims are positive assertions that could be rendered true or false in relation to such facts. Drawing on non-cognitivist insights, one might alternatively argue that these claims are more correctly understood as recorded moral judgments that express (dis)approval toward certain qualities, objects, or actions (cf. emotivism or expressivism) and/or are veiled commands to act in the relevant ways (cf. prescriptivism). The sentence 'compassion is good' is thus to be understood as a recorded expression of approval directed toward compassion and that which is compassionate. 'Suffering is bad' expresses disapproval toward suffering. (Finnigan 2015, 776)

Since *Madhyamaka* does not believe that there are any entities that are essentially real, it follows that a non-cognitive interpretation of *Madhyamaka, prima facie,* seems warranted vis-à-vis *śūnyavāda.* However, according to Finnigan, it is less clear whether, "embracing non-cognitivism about moral judgments also accommodates conventional truth" (Finnigan 2015, 777). The lack of clarity stems from the Frege-Geach problem. As noted in Chapter one, the problem relates to the fact that "moral judgments have the *appearance* of descriptive claims;" and, because of this appearance, "non-cognitivists do not consider their analysis of moral judgments to represent accurately what ordinary folks take themselves to be doing when they utter such claims as 'compassion is good.'" (Finnigan 2015, 777).

In addition to this analytic challenge, Finnigan also notes that a non-cognitive interpretation of *Madhyamka* might result with some form of relativism. Since *Madhyamaka* maintains that there is general uniformity, vis-à-vis the Perfection of Wisdom attitudes of speakers, a non-cognitive

interpretation of Buddhist ethics is hard pressed to give an account of such uniformity. One could, as she explains, attempt to provide a causal account; "one might argue that a shared enculturation into the Buddhist dharma had a decisive causal influence on the uniformity of evaluative attitudes expressed by individual *Mādhyamikas*" (Finnigan 2015, 778). Or, one might argue for some kind of evolutionary model, as well as appeal to a reflective equilibrium. However, Finnigan maintains that:

> If one were to embrace this explanatory strategy […] one could not appeal to any further fact as justificatory grounds for convergence. Specifically, one could not appeal to some shared belief or common realization of the truth of the Buddha's teachings as common ground for this generally held pro-attitude toward what is compassionate. This is a problem as it runs against the deeply held soteriological intuition that Buddhists can and do converge in evaluative attitudes, practices, and kinds of mental states given a correct understanding of the Buddha's teachings (particularly of his views on the nature of no-self, *anātman*, impermanence, *anitya*, and dependent arising, *pratītyasamutpāda*). (Finnigan 2015, 778)

According to Finnigan, the aforementioned challenges facing *Madhyamaka*, vis-à-vis moral justification, warrant the conclusion that they "cannot satisfactorily justify their moral judgments in terms consistent with their adherence to *śūnyavāda*" (Finnigan 2015, 778).

It is important to note that Finnigan does not deny the possibility of providing justificatory grounds for moral judgments while also remaining committed to the anti-realist commitments of *Madhyamaka* and the philosophy of emptiness. One suggestion she offers is that, "*Madhyamaka* views on ethics might be fruitfully engaged if one were to shift focus away from a concern with the justificatory status of moral claims and toward the role and function of assumed values with respect to shaping ethical conduct (where this includes their bearing on ethical character, and affective attitudes as well as some conception of moral phenomenology)" (Finnigan 2015, 779).

In addition to metaethical non-cognitivism, the anti-realist philosophy of fictionalism has been proffered as a way to justify value judgments in light of conventional truth (Skt. *saṃvṛti-satya*). As Mark Siderits argues in *Personal Identity and Buddhist Philosophy*, the reductionism of persons and the emptiness of all phenomena entails that there are no mind-independent truths (Siderits 2015). Accordingly, in his article "Is Reductionism Expressible," Siderits explains that a statement is ultimately

true, "if and only if it corresponds to a mind-independent reality and neither asserts nor presupposes the existence of anything not in the final ontology" (Siderits 2009, 60); however, from the perspective of mereological reductionism and the Mahāyāna philosophy of emptiness, there are no mind-independent truths, and so no statement is ultimately true. This does not mean, however, that we cannot accept statements as conventionally true; according to Siderits, fictionalism can offer a theoretical lens for understanding why propositions we do not 'ultimately' accept at face value, but which we nevertheless think have pragmatic value, can be accepted 'conventionally.'

In his article "Why the Buddha Never Uttered a Word," Mario D'Amato also defends a version of fictionalism as an interpretive lens for making sense of the epistemic status of conventional statements while remaining committed to anti-realism. According D'Amato, one can, "engage in conventional discourse without positing that the entities referred to in such discourse ultimately exist" (D'Amato 2009, 50).

> In any occurrence of language use, a Buddha would employ language without falling under the spell of words and objects – employing concepts and language in perfect accordance with conventional usage, while remaining aware that ultimately there are no referential objects. We might describe the buddha's mindful awareness in terms of what some contemporary philosophers have referred to as fictionalism. […] According to such a fictionalist view, one might engage in conventional discourse without positing that the entities referred to in such discourse ultimately exist, for example, through adding the operator "in fiction *f*" (or "according to the conventional domain") to any truth claim. Hence, on a mindful Buddha account, a Buddha may be said to use language "under erasure," employing words while remaining mindful that words do not actually refer in the way they purport to – mindfully aware that referents are nothing more than fictions. (D'Amato 2009, 50-51)

However, Laura Guerrero is not convinced that fictionalism is logically coherent and/or consistent for making sense of Mahāyāna ethics, specifically conventional propositions.

In her article "Buddhist Global Fictionalism?" Guerrero cogently argues against fictionalism by first pointing out that there are subtle differences between the ways Buddhist fictionalism can be interpreted when we take into account the philosophical differences between *Madhyamaka* and *Yogācāra*. "*Yogācāra* thinkers typically agree with *Madhyamaka* that all objects of ordinary, unenlightened, phenomenal experience are empty. However, they typically argue that there does exist a positive,

ineffable, and non-conceptualizable ultimate reality that underlies the emptiness of experienced phenomena" (Guerrero 2018, 426). However, notwithstanding these differences, Guerrero does not think the versions of global fictionalism that some Buddhist scholars have proffered, including Siderits and D'Amato, succeed; they do not, in short, show how conventional normative beliefs can be assessed or evaluated without contradicting fictionalism at its anti-realist core. Guerrero's main argument can be summarized accordingly. If Mahāyāna fictionalism can provide normative justification for conventional beliefs, then that fictionalist perspective will include normative constraints that are either fictional or non-fictional. Now, if they are non-fictional, then that would clearly contradict the anti-realist commitments that the philosophy of emptiness propounds. On the other hand, if the normative constraints are fictional, then one must explain why anyone ought to recognize and accept fictions purported in the everyday world. At this point, while the global Mahāyāna fictionalist can appeal to another fictional constraint, such an appeal, however, begs the same question all over again, *ad infinitum*.

> The problem with globalizing this form of fictionalism is that, insofar as it simply exchanges the assertion of one statement with another, it relies on the non-fictional, literal assertability of the prefixed statement. Fictionalisms that employ an operator 'according to fiction f' presume that it is possible to unproblematically assert the prefixed claim. […] On the global view, like any ordinary statement x, a statement of the form 'according to fiction f, x' cannot be asserted non-fictionally. It must also be understood as implicitly fictional and thus in need of an operator to fix the actual content asserted and the context of assessment. The result is a longer statement of the form 'according to fiction g, (according to fiction f, x).' That longer statement, being also fictional, will also need an operator to determine the content and context of assessment, etc., ad infinitum. The result is that no content or context of assessment is ever fixed for the fictional claims and thus no claim can be asserted or assessed for truth because the iterative process never ends. (Guerrero 2018, 428)

Thus, Guerrero concludes that Buddhist anti-realists ought to adopt an alternative metaethical strategy for explaining how conventional judgments, and normative propositions, can be assessed and accounted for.

In the context of Zen Buddhism, specifically Dōgen's philosophical writings which is where we will be focusing our attention in subsequent chapters, alternative strategies to non-cognitivism and fictionalism have been proffered by Russell Guilbault and Bret Davis. In "Emptiness and Metaethics: Dōgen's Anti-Realist Solution," Guilbault shows that anti-realism, mainly the non-existence of moral facts or truths, is a tenable characterization of Mahāyāna metaethics vis-à-vis emptiness (Skt. *śūnyatā*),

and that Dōgen's philosophy can provide a road map for taking this characterization seriously. According to Guilbault, "Dōgen confronts the ethics-emptiness problem in terms of Buddha-nature" (Guilbault 2020, 958). The ethics-emptiness problem is that Buddhist ethical concepts seem to require the existence of moral facts, yet the philosophy of emptiness denies the existence of such (Guilbault 2020). If, in other words, one maintains that there are no non-empty phenomena or beings, it is unclear how one can justify any ethical concept or normative belief. The interpretation of Dogen's metaethics I develop throughout remaining chapters of this dissertation parallels Guilbault's, mainly, "Dōgen's conception of Buddha-nature will not yield any objects that exist independently or have a stable essence and could thus serve as truth makers for moral claims" (Guilbault 2020, 961). Thus, Dōgen's philosophy and practice of zazen and the realization of Buddha-nature does not posit the existence of mind-independent moral facts or properties; it is for this reason that Dōgen's meatethical perspective is best interpreted as anti-realism.

Now, when it comes to justificatory status of value judgments and normative expressions, vis-à-vis Dōgen's ethical writings and monastic instructions, Guilbault thinks that Dōgen's strategy for justifying normative claims, albeit the non-existence of moral facts, is to appeal to the conventions of the Buddhist tradition in general, Zen in particular. For Dōgen, appeals to historical examples of monks and patriarchs as, "models for behavior," is sufficient (Guilbault 2020, 966). Thus, Guilbault maintains that Dōgen is a conventionalist.

A 'conventionalist' interpretation of Dōgen's ethics is similar to Bret Davis' contextualist characterization. In "Dōgen," Davis seems to share the anti-realist interpretation proposed by Guilbault; "Dōgen rejects not only egoistic but also metaphysically predetermined ideas of good and evil. The good is not a set of predefined rules that we need to implement, but rather arises with its concrete enactment" (Davis 2016, 3). What this means according to Davis is that Dōgen's ethics, rather than affirming moral relativism, whereby values are considered arbitrary and/or egocentric, resembles contextual relativism since, "he does give us method for awakening the state of heart and mind with which to properly judge good and bad according to the fluid and concrete circumstances of our lives: the method of zazen" (Davis

2016, 3). Herein I am sympathetic with Davis' interpretation that zazen provides the contextualized starting point for engaging in normative discourse and thinking through value judgments.[54] Moreover, what is interesting about Davis' contextualist interpretation is that he makes room for some of the ethical theories treated earlier in this chapter, including consequentialism and virtue theory. In regards to consequentialism, since Dōgen affirms the vow of the bodhisattva to liberate all beings from suffering, such an affirmation, "could be seen as providing a teleological gauge for a consequentialist ethic;"[55] and, in regards to virtue theory,[56] "Dōgen thinks that the proper thing to do in a situation is whatever an enlightened person would do in that situation" (Davis 2016, 3-4).

Whether we characterize Dōgen's strategy for justifying value judgments as "conventionalism" or "contextualism," these metaethical labels only provide an account of what normative expressions say; they do not clarify the meaning of normative expressions. After all it seems plausible that one could be both a conventionalist and a cognitivist (i.e. normative propositions, vis-à-vis conventions are truth apt). However, if the anti-realist characterization of Dōgen's ethics is valid, then cognitivism clearly will not serve as a counterpart without contradiction. Thus, in light of our aforementioned treatment of Mahāyāna metaethics, the question remains whether we should interpret Dōgen's writings on ethical matters through a non-cognitive lens, whereby any and all value judgments are reducible to feelings and attitudinal leanings, or should we attempt to make sense of such through a fictionalist looking glass? I will be addressing this question in upcoming chapters. Ultimately, I plan to argue that neither non-cognitivism nor fictionalism accurately characterize Dōgen's metaethics. As a counterpart to anti-realism, I plan to

[54] In Chapter six of this dissertation I argue that zazen is, according to Dōgen, a normative practice. Therein we shall see that for any given normative perspective, one side of good and bad are revealed, the other side normatively concealed.

[55] I am not entirely convinced that consequentialism is an important to 'tool' in Dōgen's normative toolkit, vis-à-vis moral reasoning, despite his affirmation of the bodhisattva vows and the high regard in which held the Lotus Sūtra, which stresses the doctrine of skillful means. I contend that Dōgen emphasizes non-action (Ch.*wu-wei*) as not committing (Jpn. *makusa*) and non-thinking (Jpn. *hishiryō*) instead of the calculus oriented perspective of utilitarianism. I will make this point more explicit in Chapter three.

[56] For a review of Dōgen's normative perspective vis-à-vis virtues, see Douglas K. Mikkelson, "Toward a Description of Dōgen's Moral Virtues." *Journal of Religious Ethics* 34, no. 2 (2008):225–251.

show that anti-cognitivism is helpful for interpreting what normative propositions 'mean' and 'say' according to Dōgen; as a metaethical counterpart, moral propositions are not reducible to feelings and attitudinal leanings, nor are they erroneously fictitious, but instead they reveal and conceal perspectives.[57]

§2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter set out to: (1) broadly explore some of the hermeneutical hurdles and variegated perspectives surrounding the scholarly pursuit of interpreting Buddhist ethics through Western ethical theories; (2) examine various interpretations some contemporary scholars have proposed so to make sense of Buddhist ethics within Theravāda and Mahāyāna traditions; and (3) explore the metaethical implications of emptiness. In regards to (1) we saw that there is no agreement amongst scholars as to whether Buddhist ethics is reducible to a single ethical theory within Western philosophy. The lack of consensus and agreement stems from the fact that Buddhism is not a monolith; depending upon the tradition and the textual source, one can find evidence that will shore up either a virtue theoretical or a utilitarian interpretation. In regards (2) I began this treatment with the Buddha's ethical teachings in the *Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta*. From there I explored Damien Keown's virtue theoretical interpretation, vis-à-vis Theravāda Buddhism as ethical theory, and P.D. Premasiri's cognitivist interpretation, vis-à-vis Theravāda Buddhism as metaethics. In the process of doing so, I also considered alternative perspectives that provide more nuance to that of Keown and Premasiri, including Charles Hallisey's particularlism. From there, I then pivoted to Mahāyāna Buddhism, specifically the philosophy of emptiness and the *bodhisattva* ideal, and explored normative perspectives in both Tibetan and East Asian traditions, including Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* and Wŏnhyo's *Essentials on Observing and Violating the Fundamentals of Bodhisattva Precepts*. In regards to Śāntideva, this inquiry showed how consequentialism, as proposed by Charles Goodman, can help make sense of the nature of Buddhist ethics, specifically the philosophy of skillful means. And, in regards to Wŏnhyo, we saw, in light of Jin

[57] While anti-cognitivism may sound like another form of relativism, in Chapter six I show that anti-cognitivism does not fall within either subjectivism or cultural relativism since both maintain that normative propositions are in fact true, albeit relative truth.

Y. Park's research, how the philosophy of emptiness destabilizes traditional ethical theories that assume foundational values and principles. In regards to (3), I began by considering how Nāgārjuna's middle way perspective concerning the nature of 'views' sets the general stage for Mahāyāna metaethics as anti-realism. From there I considered both non-cognitivism and fictionalism as metaethical counterparts to anti-realism. Based upon the research of Mark Siderits, Bronwyn Finnigan and Laura Guerrero, we saw that while anti-realism is a warranted characterization of Mahāyāna metaethics, it is less clear that non-cognitivism or fictionalism are helpful for making sense of the status of normative propositions and expressions. Accordingly, we then treated two metaethical alternatives for making sense of normative propositions in Dōgen's Zen: (a) Guilbault's conventionalism; and (b) Davis' contextualism. We noted that while these views are sufficient for making sense of what normative expressions say, they fall short of clarifying what normative expressions mean. Based upon their research, I then introduced anti-cognitivism, which I stipulated in the Chapter one, as a potential strategy so to fill that gap.

Ultimately, the general organization of this chapter is to help introduce Dōgen's normative perspective within the context of the history and cultural diffusion of Buddhism, vis-à-vis ethics. Overall, this chapter showed that while it is important not to impose Western philosophical interpretations upon the ethical writings in Buddhist traditions haphazardly, one can, with care, open up comparative dialogues, vis-à-vis meta-theories, and generate new perspectives while attempting an exploration of Buddhist thinkers, such as Wŏnhyo and Dōgen, on their own terms. In regards to Dōgen, the remaining chapters attempt to show that the stipulation of the term anti-cognitivism, a term that is not used by scholars working in the academic field of metaethics, reflects my attempt to understand Dōgen's ethics from his way-seeking perspective. From this perspective, 'when one normative side is revealed, the other side is concealed.'

Chapter Three

Beginning On the Path of Revealing and Concealing: Situating Dōgen's Metaethics

§ 3.1 *Chapter Overview*

I concluded the previous chapter by examining Mahāyāna metaethics, and the epistemic problem of whether or not an anti-realist standpoint, vis-à-vis emptiness (Skt. *śūnyatā*), can provide a justificatory account for conventional normative expressions and judgments. After reviewing non-cognitive and fictionalist strategies, it became clear, in light of Finnigan's critical analysis of the former (non-cognitivism) and Guerrero's incisive treatment of the latter (fictionalism), that these strategies are undermotivated, and thus scholars should seek out other strategies in order to solve this metaethical problem. Accordingly, I considered how conventionalist (Guilbault) and contextualist (Davis) interpretations of Dōgen's normative perspective, vis-à-vis anti-realism, might provide a strategy for doing such; however, I noted that both characterizations only provide an account of what conventional normative judgments say, and thus fall short in clarifying what they mean. Thus, I proposed that anti-cognitivism should be considered as a metaethical counterpart to anti-realism in order to specify what conventional normative expressions mean: conventional normative propositions are not reducible to feelings and attitudinal leanings, nor are they erroneously fictitious, but instead they reveal and conceal perspectives. By introducing anti-cognitivism, I am not attempting to dismiss either conventionalism or contextualism; both strategies are effective for clarifying what Dōgen's normative prescriptions and proscriptions say; for example, Dōgen's use of normative words and concepts say a lot about Zen practice and monastic training. However, I contend that the epistemic problem facing Mahāyāna anti-realism, vis-à-vis the meaning of conventional normative propositions, can be reconciled by interpreting Dōgen's metaethics as anti-cognitivism. To begin making my case for this metaethical strategy, the objective of this chapter is to situate Dōgen's metaethics in light of his practice of doing philosophy during the Kamakura period, and his journey as religious reformer and founder of the *Sōtō* (Ch. *Caodong*) tradition

of Zen in Japan. Herein, my focus will target his critical reflections regarding the Mahāyāna philosophy of original enlightenment (Jpn. *hongaku*) and Buddha-nature (Jpn. *busshō*), thereby revealing salient features of Dōgen's 'way-seeking' metaethic, vis-à-vis his philosophy of *zazen* and the nonduality of practice and realization. In the course of achieving this goal, I will also attempt to show how Dōgen's Zen perspective differs from the 'silent illumination' teachings of continental *Caodong* teachers and masters, vis-à-vis complete enlightenment. From there, I will lay out how Dōgen's philosophy of Buddha-nature and time provides, as Guilbault argues, a general blue print for his metaethical standpoint of antirealism; a standpoint which shapes his interpretation of soteriological values, including delusion and enlightenment/realization. Finally, I will conclude this treatment by also examining Dōgen's perspective of the bodhisattva ideal and the doctrine of skillful means (Skt. *upāya*). Therein I will show how his reevaluation of the doctrine of original enlightenment, vis-à-vis nonduality of practice and realization, provides a reevaluation of the doctrine of skillful means; thus, instead of interpreting skillful means a consequentialist philosophy, I contend that Dōgen interprets such in light of the East Asian philosophy of non-action (Ch. *wu-wei*).

§3.2 *Dōgen: Beginning on the Path of Metaethics*

Dōgen's philosophical practice begins at young age as a *Tendai* monk at Mt. Hiei[58] during the Kamakura period (1185 - 1333). For a thinker such as Dōgen, as well as other religious reformers including Hōnen (1133-1212), Shinran (1173-1263) and Nichiren (1185-1333), all of whom began their Buddhist training as *Tendai* [59] monks at Mt. Hiei, the practice of doing philosophy at this time was conditioned by *mappō*, 'the Decay of the Law' which was believed to have begun toward the end of the

[58] Located to the northeast of Kyoto, Mt. Hiei was the home for many *Tendai* temples, including *Enryakuji* where Dōgen trained. During the Kamakura period, roughly ninety percent of the monks at Mt. Hiei came from aristocratic families (Stone 1999).

[59] The *Tendai* school was introduced to Japan by the monk Saichō (767-822) in 805 and became one of the two dominant Buddhist traditions during the Heian period; the other tradition was the *Mantrayāna Shingon* school, which was introduced to Japan from China by Kūkai (744-835) in 816 (Harvey 1990).

Heian period (794-1185) in 1052.[60] According to Yoshiro Tamura, "As the Heian period drew to a close, the aristocratic culture began to disintegrate and the social order to collapse; the nation was beset with instability and disorder. The impermanence of life, and the folly of sinfulness of humanity, loomed large, and many people despaired, fearing that the period of the Decay of the Law (*mappō*) prophesized by the Buddha was at hand" (Tamura 2000, 85). Thus, in response to the cultural climate of this period, Japan experienced the emergence of new Buddhist schools (Jpn. *Shin Kamakura Bukkyō*) – *Jōdo Shinshū*, "True Pure Land," Nichiren and Zen – which sought to provide a philosophy and practice, particularly for the lay majority as they were the hardest hit by the cultural and environmental turbulence and uncertainty of this time period (Tamura, 2000).

Throughout Dōgen's monastic training at Mt. Hiei, the philosophy of Buddha-nature (Skt. *tathāgatagarbha*) as presented in texts such as *Awakening of Faith,*[61] the *Lotus Sūtra*[62] and the *Mahāparinirvāna Sūtra*[63] was a first-order concern. According to the *Tendai* tradition, since Buddha-nature is inherent within all beings, they championed the idea of original enlightenment (Jpn. *hongaku*)[64] rather than acquired enlightenment (Jpn. *shikaku*). The doctrine of original enlightenment is born out of the Mahāyāna philosophy of emptiness (Skt. *śūnyatā*), "which transcends the dichotomy of enlightenment

[60] According to Jacqueline Stone, "the final Dharma age (*mappō*) […] is often associated with belief in human limitations, in the depravity of the times, in salvation after death, and in the need to rely on the power of the Buddha" (Stone, 1999, 34).

[61] Kūkai (744-835) is recognized as the first Japanese Buddhist thinker to engage one of the central themes of the *Awakening of Faith*, mainly original enlightenment (Jpn. *hongaku*); such engagement shaped his conception of Buddha-nature whereby all beings are understood to be inherently enlightened, not just humans. For Kūkai, the doctrine of original enlightenment, "is linked to the esoteric doctrines of identity with the cosmic Buddha and of realizing Buddhahood with this very body (*sokushin jōbutsu*)" (Stone 1999, 11). As we shall see, Dōgen also maintained this view of Buddha-nature and the realization of Buddhahood in this very body, vis-à-vis the practice of *zazen*.

[62] According to Jacqueline Stone, "The Lotus Sūtra is central to the T'ien-t'ai/Tendai tradition, which regards it as the culmination of the Buddha's teachings, preached during the last eight years of his life" (Stone 1999, 12).

[63] Not be confused with the Pāli *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta,* which deals with the last year of the historical Buddha's life, the *Mahāparinirvāna Sūtra* is tied to the *Tathāgatagarbha* tradition of Mahāyana Buddhism. "The *tathāgatagarbha*, the Buddha-nature, or more literally, Tathāgata-embryo or Tathāgata-womb is that within each being which enables enlightenment to take place. The claim that all sentient beings have this element is the claim that all sentient beings have it within them to attain full Buddhahood" (Williams 89, 98).

[64] The doctrine of *hongaku* was developed in the Heian and Kamakura periods by Ryōgen (912-85), Genshin (942-1017), Kakuun (953-1007) et al (Tamura 2000).

and nonenlightenment" (Tamura 2000, 74). From Dōgen's perspective,[65] this doctrine was problematic for the following reason: "If we are primordially enlightened and consequently liberated here and now within this body-mind existence, then why do we have to exert ourselves at all? What is the significance of intellectual, moral, cultic, and religious activities and endeavors?" (Kim 2004, 23).[66] Thus, while Dōgen was receiving instruction in the doctrine of original enlightenment through texts such as *Flower Garland Sūtra* (Jpn. *Kegonkyō*), his ritual training and practice seemed to promote the idea of acquired enlightenment. To maintain that Buddha-nature exists inherently, but that it is to be realized through monastic training, creates a duality between practice and attainment. This duality thus presupposes that Buddha-nature is a 'thing' that can be affirmed somewhere in time and space.

Determined to resolve this dualistic tension, Dōgen abandoned his monastic training at Mt. Hiei and began studying and practicing Zen at *Kenninji* monastery in Kyoto under the guidance of Eisai (1141-1215), the founder of the *Rinzai* Zen sect (Ch. *Linji*) in Japan, and his disciple Myōzen (1184-1225). After training at *Kenninji* for nine years, in 1223 Dōgen traveled to China in search of a teacher who

[65] Steven Heine characterizes Dōgen's perspective at this time as the "informative period." According to Heine, Dōgen's life can be broken down into five periods: (1) formative; (2) informative; (3) transformative; (4) reformative; and (5) Performative. The formative period refers to his early upbringing and education in Chinese classics and poetry, as well as the death of his mother. The informative refers to Dōgen's early training as a *Tendai* monk, and his great doubt vis-à-vis Buddha-nature. The transformative period marks the time when Dōgen traveled to China and trained under Master Rujing, and thereby realized Dharma transmission. It is also during this period that Dōgen began to compose his writings, including the *Shōbōgenzō*. The reformative period refers to Dōgen's monastic life at *Kōshōji* temple; at this time, he composed roughly half of the entire *Shōbōgenzō.* Finally, the performative period refers to his monastic life at *Eiheiji* temple, where he continued to write and edit the *Shōbōgenzō*. According to Heine, "Over the course of the decade of the informative period, in order to resolve his fundamental spiritual conundrum regarding the relation between original enlightenment and the need for everyday practice, Dōgen is said to have studied the entire Buddhist canon multiple times" (Heine 2020, 69).

[66] It is important to note that Dōgen's great doubt, vis-à-vis Buddha-nature and original enlightenment is not included in Dōgen's writings. As Jacqueline Stone explains, "This story appears in a hagiographical account written after Dōgen's death and contains numerous problems. Dōgen himself does not cite this 'great doubt' as the reason for his departure from Mt. Hiei. His own writings suggest that he was troubled by the contradiction between his ideal of an authentic teacher and the worldly aspirations of the monks around him. Or, he may have left Mt. Hiei in connection with the fact that the teacher from whom he had received ordination–Kōen, the zasu or chief abbot of the Enryakuji–had been forced to resign toward the end of 1213. […] Whatever the case, it seems probable that the 'great doubt' represents a hagiographical 'reading back,' into the beginnings of Dōgen's career, of his later concern with the relationship between practice and innate Buddha nature" (Stone 1999, 73).

would be able to provide authentic instruction and Zen transmission.[67] His journey led him to some of the largest *Chan* temples throughout China, many of which housed up to 1500 monks. After a long search, in 1225 Dōgen began training under Master Rujing (Jpn. *Tendō Nyōjō*) (1163-1228) at *Jingde* Monastery on Mount *Tiantong* (Jpn. *Tendō*).[68] It is under Master Rujing's tutelage, vis-à-vis silent illumination,[69] that Dōgen received dharma transmission within the *Sōtō* tradition (Ch. *Caodong*) which he eventually brings back, empty handed,[70] to Japan.[71]

In *Hōkyō-ki*, "Journal of My Study in China," Dōgen provides an account of his training at Mount *Tiantong*, which included: (1) instruction in dharma transmission vis-à-vis the patriarchs and ancestors (e.g., Bodhidharma and Hui-neng);[72] (2) a critical examination of Mahāyāna texts, such as *Śūraṃgama*

[67] According to Steven Heine, "Dōgen became the second main Zen pioneer who traveled to learn the practice of seated meditation in Southern Song-dynasty (Nan Song) China (1127-1279), following the four-year journey of Eisai from 1187 to 1191" (Heine 2020, 13).

[68] *Jingde* Monastery on Mount *Tiantong* is where Master Hongzhi (1091-1157) had been abbot. Master Hongzhi had a deep impact upon Dōgen's Zen perspective. As Taigen Daniel Leighton notes, "Hongzhi had been abbot, and a third-generation successor to Changlu Qingliao, a dharma-brother of Hongzhi (both were disciples of Danxia Zichun). Dōgen clearly reveres Hongzhi, referring to him particularly as an ancient buddha, and says that Hongzhi is also the only person Rujing ever called and 'ancient buddha.' […] Hongzhi's influence on Dōgen can be seen most clearly in their meditation practice and in their understanding of its meaning" (Leighton 1991, xxxiv).

[69] Silent Illumination Zen (Jpn. *mokushō*) emerges as one of the two main streams of Chan/Zen around the middle of the Song dynasty through the practice and teachings of Ta-hui Tsung-kao (Jpn. Daie Sōkō) (1089-1163) (Dumoulin 1988). According to Taigen Daniel Leighton, "This objectless and nondualistic meditation does not involve stages or striving for any goal or achievement; thus it is an activity radically other than the usual worldly activity, which grasps and seeks for some result" (Leighton 1991, xxxiv).

[70] Returning 'empty handed' is a reference to the fact that Dōgen did not return to Japan with relics or texts, but rather a simple practice of just sitting (Jpn. *shikantaza*), or zazen only (Heine 2020).

[71] For a comprehensive review of the historical development of Chan/Zen, see Peter D. Hershock, *Chan Buddhism*. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005). The *Caodong/Sōtō* lineage that Dōgen received instruction from Rujing belongs to the Southern school of Chinese Chan. This lineage is popularly characterized as the "silent illumination" (Jpn. *mokushō-zen*) tradition of Zen due to the emphasis that is placed upon seated meditation (Jpn. zazen). The *Linji/Rinzai* tradition, which is the tradition Dōgen was first introduced to under the tutelage of Eisai, belongs to the Northern school of Chinese Chan. This tradition was critical of the silent illumination practice of meditation, believing that it conditioned a complacent state of quietism. Thus, instead of silent illumination meditation, the *Linji*/Rinzai tradition championed *kōan*-gazing meditation (Jpn. *kanna-zen*).

[72] To review the genealogical tables of dharma-transmission for both *Rinzai* and *Sōtō* lineages beginning with Bodhidharma (d. 532), see Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History vol. 1* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988).

Sūtra;[73] (3) the philosophy of emptiness according to Nāgārjuna;[74] and (4) the practice of zazen. In regards to (1), while Rujing instructs Dōgen that it is important to know the history of dharma transmission and the stories of the patriarchs, he cautions Dōgen not to become attached to the idea of a Zen school; "To call the wide road of buddhas and ancestors 'the Zen School' is thoughtless talk. 'The Zen School' is a false name used by bald-head idiots, and all sages from ancient times are aware of this" (Dōgen 1999, 9).

In regards to (2), after posing the following question to Rujing, "What are the *sūtras* that contain complete meaning?", in contrast to those that are incomplete, Rujing replies to Dōgen, "*Sūtras* that contain complete meaning include descriptions of the events in the past lives of the Tathāgata. *Sūtras* that explain only events in this world have a limited perspective" (Dōgen 1999, 11). Embedded within Rujing's response is a firm commitment to the philosophy of rebirth. According to Dōgen's records of Rujing's instructions, to affirm Buddhist teachings while downplaying or simply ignoring the Buddhist philosophy of rebirth is nihilistic; "To deny that there are future births is nihilism; Buddha ancestors do not hold to the nihilistic views of those who are outside the way" (Dōgen 1999, 4).

In regards to (3) Dōgen reports that he asked Rujing, "Can the negative results that come from delusion, external conditions, and karma really be the path of Buddha ancestors [as Nāgārjuna's teachings say]?" (Dōgen 1999, 7). Herein, Dōgen's question seems to reveal his existential concern regarding

[73] According to Paul Williams, while this *sūtra* is important within the Zen tradition, Dōgen suspected that this *sūtra* was not authentic, and should be distinguished from the *Śūraṅgamasamādhi Sūtra* (Williams 1989). Translated around the end of the second century, the *Śūraṅgamasamādhi Sūtra* is part of a collection of Mahāyāna *sūtras* that emphasize faith and devotion to *bodhisattvas*. One bodhisattva in particular that is featured in the *Śūraṅgamasamādhi Sūtra* is a Mañjuśrī, the *bodhisattva* of wisdom. "Just as Avalokiteśvara is said to incarnate all the Buddha's compassion, so Mañjuśrī, manifests the other 'wing' of enlightenment – wisdom (Williams 1989, 238).

[74] It is important to note that the value the Zen tradition places upon Nāgārjuna's philosophy of emptiness is shared by other Mahāyāna traditions including Tantric branches of Buddhism (e.g., *Shingon*) and the devotional communities of Amitābha Buddha as they include Nāgārjuna as one of their patriarchs (Dumoulin 1988). In the context of Dōgen's Zen, Nāgārjuna's logic of emptiness, vis-à-vis *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*, provides a conceptual blueprint – A is ~A ∴ A is A – for several important passages in Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō*, including the opening passage of *Genjō Kōan*.

original enlightenment and licensed evil,[75] which his whole being had been arrested by at *Enryakuji* of Mt. Hiei. According to historical records,[76] the doctrine of original enlightenment, particularly as it was affirmed at Mt. Hiei where Dōgen began his monastic training,[77] seemed to legitimize antinomian behavior (Stone 1999). Rujing's response to Dōgen's question is such that it shapes many of Dōgen's later writings on karma,[78] particularly those in his magnum opus, the *Shōbōgenzō*:

> Rujing said, "You should always trust teachings by ancestors like Nāgārjuna; their views are never mistaken. As far as the negative effect of karma goes, one should practice wholeheartedly, and it will certainly be turned around." […] "You should never ignore cause and effect." Yongjia said, "Superficial understanding of emptiness ignores cause and effect and invites calamity." Those who ignore cause and effect cut off good roots in buddha-dharma. How can you regard them as descendants of Buddha ancestors? (Dōgen 1999, 7)

And, when Dōgen asked Rujing: "The nature of all things is either good, bad, or neutral. Which of these is the buddha-dharma?", the Zen Master replied, "The buddha-dharma goes beyond these three." (Dōgen 1999, 9). Herein, Rujing's response reveals a metaethic of anti-realism; mainly, since all things are

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[75]The idea of 'licensed evil,' as James Dobbins explains, "existed under a variety of names, and encompassed a number of different beliefs and practices. The most common expression used for it was *zōaku muge*, 'committing evil without obstruction.' Other terms referring to it were 'self-indulgence without remorse' (*hōtsu muzan*) and 'flaunting Amida's vow' (*hongan bokori*)" (Dobbins 1989, 48). Dōgen's writings on ethics, specifically the *Shōbōgenzō* fascicle *Shoaku Makusa*, "Not Committing Wrongs," which we will begin exploring in Chapter four and Chapter five, directly addresses this normative problem of 'committing evil without obstruction' (Jp. *zōaku muge*).

[76] "The tale of the *Heike*" (Jpn. *Heike monogatari*) is one such record which seems to reveal the legitimizing of wrongdoings. This tale provides an account of events that unfolded due to the funeral of Emperor Nijō in ll65. According to Jacqueline Stone, "a dispute broke out between the monks of the Enryakuji and the Kōfukuji over precedence in the ritual. The conflict escalated, and armed monks of Kōfukuji razed a number of Tendai buildings. Enryakuji monks retaliated by burning the Kiyomizudera, a branch temple of the Kōfukuji in the eastern part of the capital" (Stone 1999, 222). While Dōgen does not, in so far as I am aware, directly reference this incident, one can infer that since he trained at Enryakuji, it is likely that he was aware of its history, including this event. Moreover, one can infer that tales such as this influenced his nuanced views concerning ritual practices such as prostrations, chanting, burning incense etc. As I will show below, Dōgen prioritizes the practice of *zazen*; and, while he does not dismiss the other religious practices and rituals, he does not believe that they are sufficient for authentically realizing Buddha-nature. Indeed, the dispute within *Heike monogatari* is a historical incident that reflects how ritual practices can become an object of ideological attachment; such attachment, according to Dōgen, occludes realization of Buddha-nature.

[77] Dōgen was not the only monk form Mt. Hiei who was troubled by the doctrine of original enlightenment and the legitimizing of evil. As Stone notes, "founders of the new Kamakura Buddhism, such as Shinran, while appreciating the philosophical nondualism of original enlightenment thought, recognized its moral dangers and revised it accordingly" (Stone 1999, 223).

[78] In Chapter five I treat Dōgen's writings on karma in the fascicle *Shinjin-Inga*, "Deep Belief in Cause and Effect" wherein he echoes Rujing's standpoint, "You should not ignore cause and effect" (Dōgen 1990, 7).

empty, including values, the realization of the Buddha-nature is neither restricted nor reducible to these normative dualisms. While a literal reading of Rujing's response might lead one to conclude that the philosophy of emptiness, which is the heart of the Buddha-dharma, entails that Zen philosophy and practice transcends ethics, and/or permits licensed evil, I plan to show throughout this dissertation that such entailment is not how Dōgen understood Rujing's metaethical perspective; one can, as I will argue through a close reading of Dōgen's writings, 'go beyond' realist conceptions of normativity yet nevertheless retain a web-of-beliefs, vis-à-vis value judgments, albeit recognizing that they are not inherently real (i.e. anti-realism).

Finally, in regards to (4) what makes Rujing's instructions on the practice of meditation unique, particularly in light of Buddhist teachings on "mind-development" (Skt. *citta-bhāvanā*) vis-à-vis "tranquility" (Skt. *śamtha*) and "insight" (Skt. *vipaśanā*)[79] meditation, is the idea of "dropping off body and mind" (Jpn. *shinjin datsuraku*). Consider the following question and answer dialogue from Dōgen's *Hōkyō-ki*, whereby Rujing is unambiguously clear that this practice ought not be understood from a partisan perspective, vis-à-vis Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna polemics:

> Rujing said, "Studying Zen is dropping off body and mind. Without depending on the burning of incense, bowing, chanting Buddha's names, repentance, or sūtra reading, devote yourself to just sitting."
>
> I asked, "What is dropping off body and mind?"
>
> Rujing said, "Dropping off body and mind is zazen. When you just sit, you are free from the five sense desires and the five hindrances."
>
> I asked, "Is this freedom from the five sense desires and the five hindrances the same as what the sūtra schools are talking about? Does it mean we are to be practitioners of both Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna?"
>
> Rujing said, "Descendants of ancestors should not exclude the teachings of either vehicle. If students ignore the Tathāgata's sacred teachings, how can they become the descendants of Buddha ancestors?" (Dōgen 1999, 10)

[79] Vipaśanā, which literally means "see clearly," parallels the "see true nature" (Jpn. *kenshō*) in Zen. As Peter Harvey notes, the *Sōtō* practice of meditation of "just sitting" (Jpn. *shikantaza*), "can be seen as akin to the *Vipassanā-yāna*, which develops Insight then calm" (Harvey 1990, 270)

The teaching and practice of "dropping off body and mind" is understood to be pivotal in triggering Dōgen's enlightenment experience, which in turn led to his receiving dharma-transmission. As Hee-Jin Kim explains, it was in 1225 during a three-month meditation retreat whereupon a monk sitting next to Dōgen was forcefully admonished by the Rujing for falling asleep:

> "In zazen it is imperative to cast off body and mind. How could you indulge in sleeping?" This remark shook Dōgen's whole being to its very core, and then an inexpressible, ecstatic joy engulfed his heart. In Ju-chings's private quarters that same morning, Dōgen offered incense and worshiped Buddha. This unusual action of Dōgen prompted Ju-ching to ask: "What is incense burning for?" The disciple exuberantly answered: "my body and mind are cast off!" "The body and mind are cast off" (*shinjin-datsuraku*), joined the teacher, "cast off are the body and mind" (*datsuraku-shinjin*). Thus, Ju-ching acknowledge the authenticity of Dōgen's enlightenment. (Kim 2004, 36-37)

Herein, the if/then conditional relationship between the antecedent *shinjin datsuraku*[80] and the consequent realization of the Buddha-dharma seems to have resolved the tension for Dōgen between 'original enlightenment' and 'acquired enlightenment,' vis-à-vis Buddha-nature. While Rujing does not provide, at least within Dōgen's records, an explanation as to how the practice of dropping off body and mind makes Zen meditation, vis-à-vis 'just sitting' (Jpn. *shikantaza*), different from *vipaśanā,* one can discern an explanation within Dōgen's writings, particularly the *Shōbōgenzō,* as we shall see in the next section. Before we consider such, it is important to note that Dōgen revealed his insight, vis-à-vis dropping off body and mind, through a ritual practice that Rujing instructed him not to rely upon. Coupled by the fact that Rujing conferred dharma transmission following this ritual performance shows that one ought not think that the embodied language of ritual practices is something that one should abandon wholesale, despite the emphasis that Rujing and Dōgen place upon the practice of 'just sitting.' While the language of ritual can lead to ideological attachments and polemical disputes, such as those at Mt. Hiei, if one

[80] It is important to note that there is no evidence within Rujing's writings that he actually used the phrase "dropping off body-and-mind." There is, however, textual evidence in one of his poems that he used the phrase "casting off dust from the mind." Accordingly, "It seems that Dōgen, as a non-native speaker who had difficulty deciphering the mentor's words precisely, either misconstrued what Rujing said, or, more likely, deliberately altered the wording to reflect an indirect critique of his teacher. Rujing's saying seems to indicate subtle duality in that ignorance is caused by physical objects collecting in the mind as the source of sensations, just as dust alights and blurs the surface of a mirror" (Heine 2020, 16).

performs such via dropping off body and mind, Dōgen's enlightenment experience seems to show that rituals are valid forms of expressing one's sincerity and insight.

§ 3.3 *An Empty Handed Ethic*

When Dōgen returned to Japan in 1227 with the intention of establishing a new practice of Zen, he resided at *Kennin-ji* for three years whereupon he began his writing career by first composing *Fukan zazengi*, "Universal Guide to the Standard Method of Zazen." The opening lines of this instruction manual alludes to the tension between original enlightenment and acquired enlightenment; "Now, when we research it, the truth originally is all around: why should we rely upon practice and experience? The real vehicle exists naturally: why should we put forth great effort?" (Dōgen 1994, 279). Rather than dialogically explaining how the tension between original and acquired enlightenment can be reconciled, he simply wants to show how it can be, via *shinjin datsuraku*, in the following verse:

> Therefore we should cease the intellectual work of studying sayings and chasing words. We should learn the backward step of turning light and reflecting. Body and mind will naturally fall away, and the original features will manifest themselves before us. If we want to attain the matter of the ineffable, we should practice the matter of the ineffable at once. (Dōgen 1994, 280)

In Chapter six, we shall explore his practice of *zazen* in closer detail, particularly as we consider his philosophy of non-thinking (Jpn. *hishiryō*). For right now, it is worth noting that it seems as though Dōgen did not think the problem of original enlightenment could be resolved via "truth-seeking" theories, but instead through a "way-seeking" practice. This is perhaps tied to the fact that he realized that the doctrine of original enlightenment was not a philosophy that one should try to refute, abandon or dismiss; as Kim states, "Dogen did not question the truth of original enlightenment, but believed it with his whole heart and mind" (Kim 2004, 23). Instead, the problem of original enlightenment and the idea that all beings have Buddha-nature arises out of our thinking (Jpn. *shiryō*) and dualistic interpretations. In regards to the *Tendai* perspective in which he began his monastic training, Dōgen rejected the dualistic view that one could maintain the doctrine of original enlightenment while denying the importance of practice; and, in regards to the *Caodong* lineage, Dōgen felt that while this lineage, "in principle accepted

practice based upon original enlightenment," nevertheless retained, "vestiges of the dualistic view of acquired enlightenment" (Kim 2004, 57). As we shall see in upcoming chapters, Dōgen attempts to show that while it is the case that all beings are already enlightened, one only realizes such through practice, mainly *zazen*. Thus, according to Dōgen, one ought not practice *zazen* with the hope of gradually acquiring enlightenment in the future; instead, one should realize that the very practice of *zazen* is itself the realization of enlightenment and embodiment of Buddha-nature.

In 1230, Dōgen moved to an abandoned temple, *An'yoin*, in Fukakusa, and began composing the *Shōbōgenzō,* "Treasury of the True Dharma-Eye" beginning with the fascicle *Bendōwa*,[81] "Negotiating the Way," which explains the basic tenets of his philosophy and practice of *zazen* through a dialogue of questions and answers (Kim, 2004).[82] Therein, when examining the relationship between the practice of *zazen* and *shinjin datsuraku*, Dōgen states, "Just sit and get the state which is free of body and mind. If a human being, even for a single moment, manifests the Buddha's posture in the three forms of conduct, while [that person] sits up straight in *samādhi*, the entire world of Dharma assumes the Buddha's posture and the whole space becomes the state of realization" (Dōgen 1994, 4-5). From Dōgen's standpoint, the practice of *zazen*, whereby one's attachments to mind and body fall away, is the realization of Buddha-nature (i.e. the nonduality of practice and realization).[83] However, rather than thinking that Buddha-

[81] According to Kim, "the *Fukan zazengi* and the *Bendōwa* chapter […] laid the cornerstone of his religious and philosophical citadel. Upon this foundation Dōgen's Zen Buddhism, though initially transplanted from China, gradually developed into a distinctively Japanese form that was the product of the symbolic model Dōgen inherited from Buddhist traditions, […] his own idiosyncrasies, and the social and historical peculiarities of thirteenth-century Japan" (Kim 2004, 40).

[82] It is worth noting that in *Bendōwa*, one can interpret direct philosophical parallels to the *Awakening of Faith*, as Yoshito S. Hakeda footnotes. For example, in the *Awakening of Faith* it states, "The Mind in terms of the Absolute is the one World of reality (*dharmadhātu*) and the essence of all phases of existence in their totality" (Hakeda 1967, 32). Hakeda maintains that this verse emanates from the following passage in Dōgen's Bendōwa: "All dharmas, myriad phenomena and accumulated things, are totally just the one mind, without exclusion or disunion. All these various lineages of the Dharma assert that [myriad things and phenomena] are the even and balanced undivided mind, other than which there is nothing" (Dōgen 1994, 15-16).

[83] According to Jacqueline Stone, the *Tendai* philosophy of *hongaku* significantly shaped Dōgen's nondual perspective. She notes that, in light of Yamanouchi Shun'yu, a Zen/*Tendai* scholar, "Dōgen's teaching of original realization and wondrous practice should be understood as belonging to the same intellectual stream as Hōchi-bō Shōshin's critique of original enlightenment thought. Shōshin, in a manner consistent with the *Awakening of Faith*, saw *hongaku* as the Buddha-potential of sentient beings to be realized in practice, and not as actual Buddha-hood

nature is something that one possesses independently, Dōgen believed that all of existence is Buddha-nature as there is no duality between self and other.[84] Before we explore his nondual interpretation of Buddha-nature, it is worth considering Dōgen's reasoning as to why the practice of *shinjin datsuraku* is distinct from the meditative practice of *vipaśyanā*.

In the *Bendōwa* fascicle, Dōgen addresses the following question:

> [Someone] asks, "Is there nothing to prevent a person who practices this Zazen from also performing mantra and quiet-reflection practices?"

Dōgen frames his response to this question concerning the merits of chanting *mantras*[85] and practicing "tranquility" and "insight" meditation, in light of his journey to China:

> When I was in China, I heard the true essence of the teachings from a true master; he said that he had never heard that any of the patriarchs who received the authentic transmission of the Buddha-seal ever performed such practices additionally, in the Western Heavens or in the Eastern Lands, in the past or in the present. Certainly, unless we devote ourselves to one thing, we will not attain complete wisdom. (Dōgen 1994, 16)

As noted above, it is important to bear in mind that Dōgen does not believe that the 'one practice' of just sitting (Jpn. *shikantaza*) precludes other monastic praxis and rituals. There are a number of fascicles in the *Shōbōgenzō* that highlight the value and importance of upholding rituals such as serving offerings,

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itself. Both Shōshin and Dōgen's teacher Ju-ching, Yamanouchi points out, criticized the idea of original enlightenment as a naturalist heresy" (Stone 1999, 75).

[84] Dōgen's conception of Buddha-nature is not unique to his perspective alone. In regards to Early Buddhism, for example, Lambert Schmithausen maintains that insentient beings such as, "plants (and seeds) were probably regarded as a kind of borderline case, on the boundary between sentient and insentient beings, and that a theoretical, doctrinal decision with regard to their status was not found necessary, or was even deliberately avoided. As a borderline case, plants (and seeds) could be dealt with pragmatically" (Schmithausen 2009, 29). See Lambert Schmithausen, *Plants in Early Buddhism and the Far Eastern Idea of the Buddha Nature of Grasses and Trees.* (Bhairahawa, Nepal: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2009). In the context of Mahāyāna traditions, Shingon Master Kūkai maintained that all beings, including plants and rocks, are Buddha-nature. "In Japan, the problem of Buddhahood of insentient beings – refocused as the Buddhahood of grasses and trees – garnered greater interest and moved in a different direction. Kūkai saw plants and trees as participating ontologically in the five great elements that compose the Dharma body" (Stone 1999, 29). The research findings of Schmithausen and Stone reveal that the non-anthropocentric perspective embraced by Dōgen, vis-à-vis Buddha-nature, is a perspective that has been part of the emergence and evolution of Buddhism proper. I will say more about this point in Chapter seven as I examine Dōgen's non-anthropocentric philosophy in dialogue with Nietzsche.

[85] In Chapter six I consider Dōgen's nuanced critique of *sūtra* chanting in light of his philosophy of *zazen*. In short, while Dōgen respected the ritual practice of chanting sūtras and burning incense, he did not believe that such practices were sufficient for realizing Buddha-nature. That being said, as I noted above, Dōgen does think that ritual practices can serve as valid mode of expressing one's sincerity and insight, vis-à-vis Buddha-nature.

prostrations, burning incense, chanting etc.[86]; such fascicles include *Kuyo-Shobutsu*, "Serving Offerings to Buddhas," and *Gyoji*, "[Pure] Conduct and Observance [of Precepts]." That being said, the aforementioned passage makes clear that Dōgen thought that the practice of *zazen*, vis-à-vis *shinjin datsuraku*, is a different practice than *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*; according to Dōgen, if we do not devote ourselves to "one thing," mainly *zazen*, then we will not realize complete wisdom (i.e. Buddha-nature). Now, what makes this value judgment interesting is that 'silent illumination' meditation, vis-à-vis just sitting (Jpn. *shikantaza*), within the *Caodong* lineage is believed to have been a nondual affirmation of *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā* (Harvey 1990).[87] Thus it seems plausible to infer that: (1) either Dōgen believed that the instruction he received on the practice of zazen, vis-à-vis dropping off body and mind, is a special transmission that was not instructed by other Zen masters; or (2) Dōgen was not sympathetic with 'silent illumination' teachings and methods. Based upon Ishii Shūdō's research, I contend that (2) is a warranted inference; as he notes in "Dōgen Zen and Song Dynasty China," one will not find in Dōgen's writings the use of the 'silent illumination' label so as to voice his standpoint on zazen practice (Shūdō 2012). And, while it is the case that Dōgen deeply respected Master Hongzhi, a prominent teacher of 'silent illumination,' and embraced the *Caodong* master's nondual affirmation of the unity of practice and

[86] Griffith Foulk provides a cogent interpretation Dōgen's writings on monastic rituals and practices that challenges the generalized interpretation that *zazen*, and *zazen* alone, defines Dōgen's monastic perspective and practice. See Griffith Foulk, "Just Sitting? Dōgen's Take on Zazen, Sutra Reading, and Other Conventional Buddhist Practices," In *Dōgen: Textual and Historical Studies*, ed. Steven Heine, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). pp. 75-106. I am sympathetic with Foulk's main conclusion. Dōgen advocates for the 'one practice' of zazen so to stress the importance of the embodied perspective it conditions, "especially for beginners on the Buddhist Path or those who had just begun to practice under a Zen master" (Foulk 2012, 105). More specifically, "what Dōgen meant by 'just sitting' was not an exclusive focus on the practice of zazen, but rather a deep-seated, unshakable insight into the emptiness (*kū*) of dharmas (*hō*) –that is, an awareness of the ultimately fictive nature of all mental constructs (*hō*)–which is the proper frame of mind for engaging in all Buddhist practices if one is to avoid the trap of deluded attachment to them" (Foulk 2012, 105).

[87] It is important to note that, according to Heinrich Dumoulin, it is difficult to give a completely clear picture of the method of meditation that Bodhidharma passed on to Hui-ko and subsequent patriarchs and masters. Dumoulin explains that, "the unique quality of Bodhidharma's meditation was contained in the word *pi-kuan* ("wall gazing"). *Pi-kuan* meditation, which is quite different from the Indian stages of *dhyāna* and the "steady gazing" (Skt., *śamatha-vipaśyanā*; Chin., *chih-kuan*, Jpn., *Shikan*) of the *Tendai* (Chin., *T'ien-t'ai*) school, was worthy of the highest praise. (Dumoulin 1988, 96).

realization, there are subtle differences in how they use the phrase *shinjin datsuraku* in their writings. As Shūdō explains:

> Although Dōgen's teaching is not essentially different from Hongzhi's, and both emphasize "unification with Tathāgata" (inherent realization), Dōgen changes the priority to "performing the same practice as the Tathāgata" (wondrous cultivation). In Hongzhi, the phrases "casting off mind and dust" and "entirely cast off body and mind" indicate "inherent realization." Even though Dōgen also adopted the notion of "inherent realization," he emphasized the practice of "wondrous cultivation" in "casting off body and mind." When Hongzhi used the phrase "casting off mind and dust," he used it frequently in the context of developing complete perfection. When Dōgen used the phrase "casting off body and mind," he emphasized nature as an unending process of cultivation and realization that refrains from the notion of complete perfection. (Shūdō 2012, 163)

Shūdō's interpretation of Dōgen, vis-à-vis "incomplete perfection," helps make sense of a key passage concerning practice and enlightenment in the fascicle *Genjō Kōan*: "When we use the whole body-and-mind to look at forms, and when use the whole body-and-mind to listen to sounds even though we are sensing them directly, it is not like the mirrors reflection of an image, and not like water and the moon. While we are experiencing one side, we are blind to the other side" (Dōgen 1994, 34).[88] I maintain that Dōgen's philosophy of language[89] is helpful for interpreting this verse, vis-à-vis Dōgen's incomplete perfection and enlightenment. I contend that just as there is some aspect of our experience of phenomena that is inexpressible despite one's ability to express our perspectives with conventional subjects and predicates (i.e. one side is expressible while the other side is inexpressible) there is some aspect of one's enlightenment experience that remains concealed. There are a number of fascicles in the *Shōbōgenzō* that take up the subject matter of inexpressibility and/or ineffability, including *Kattō*, "The Complicated." My interpretation of Dōgen's standpoint regarding that which is inexpressible is informed by Victor Sōgen Hori's position in *Zen Sand: The Book of Capping Phrases for Kōan Practice*. Hori maintains that inexpressibility is not unique to Zen, vis-à-vis enlightenment, but rather all experiences are in some way

[88] See Steven Heine, "What is on the Other Side? Delusion and Realization in Dōgen's Genjō Kōan" In *Dōgen: Textual and Historical Studies* ed. Steven Heine, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). In this article Heine explores a range of interpretations concerning this verse that various Dōgen scholars have proffered. Drawing inspiration from scholars such Ishii Seijun's, Heine proposes an interpretation that is, "based on the notion of horizontality, or the idea that the range of human perception even for the enlightened is characterized by finitude yet allows for enhancing and transforming this limitation as the basis of attaining transcendence" (Heine 2012, 44).
[89] Chapter five of this dissertation provides a more detailed treatment of Dōgen's philosophy of language.

inexpressible (Hori 2003). Accordingly, rather than interpreting the ineffable aspects of our experiences as completely distinct from language, our use of words and concepts shows that ineffability is embedded within our everyday expressions that attempt to reveal qualitative aspects of experience. For example, while words like 'piquant' can serve as an effective predicate for describing the flavor of fermented cabbage, this word will not completely reveal what the flavor of fermented cabbage is like. Thus expressions such as, "it tastes piquant," simultaneously reveal and conceal one's phenomenal experience of fermented cabbage; after all, if one has never experienced fermented cabbage, nor anything that they would describe as 'piquant,' then they can certainly inquire further and ask: what is the flavor 'piquant' like? Until one tastes fermented cabbage, words and letters will remain quite limited and ineffectual. And, even if one finally tastes fermented cabbage, it is not obvious that the description, "it tastes piquant," lays bare the experience of such in its entirety. Accordingly, just as the inexpressible side of expressions is not separate from the expressions themselves, but rather part of language, so too is concealment (i.e. delusion) part of enlightenment. In other words, enlightenment for Dōgen does not eliminate delusion completely, but rather illuminates it (i.e. incomplete enlightenment), just as words and letters reveal the inexpressible (i.e. incomplete expressions).

In addition to language, the nonduality of revealing and concealing is embedded within Dōgen's philosophical treatment of time and our experience of temporality. For example, in the fascicle *Uji*, "Existence-Time," Dōgen states, "To grasp the pivot and express it: all that exists throughout the whole Universe is lined up in a series and at the same time is individual moments of Time. Because [Time] is Existence-Time, it is my Existence-Time" (Dōgen 1994, 112). I will say more about Dōgen's standpoint on time in light of his philosophy of Buddha-nature below. For right now, as I interpret this passage, Dōgen maintains that while there is no duality between all beings, and no duality between beings and time, one's experience unfolds from a subjective perspective that is distinct from other beings and phenomena; hence, "we are blind to the other side" (Dōgen 1994, 34). Thus, Dōgen's 'returning empty handed' indicates that not only did he return to Japan from China without any relics or texts, but he also

did not intend to teach the practice of 'silent illumination.' For Dōgen, while teachers of 'silent illumination' affirm a clear duality between that which is revealed and concealed, and/or complete enlightenment and delusion, his practice of *zazen* emphasizes the nonduality of revealing and concealing, enlightenment and delusion. To highlight this point further, let us consider Dōgen's normative standpoint concerning the body.

Building upon the interpretations of Hee-Jin Kim and Shigenori Nagatomo, I contend that a key difference between Dōgen's practice of *zazen* and that of *śamatha-vipaśyanā* pertains to conceptions of the body. For example, in "The Foundations of Mindfulness" (Pāli *Satipatthāna Sutta*), which is a touchstone for insight meditation, the value judgment that the body is foul and repulsive is salient to this practice, particularly in section four, "Foulness – the Bodily Parts."[90] Contrary to this value judgment, Dōgen's writings emphasize a perspective whereby Buddha-nature is realized within and through the body (Kim 2004). According to Shigenori Nagatomo,[91] Dōgen's practice of *zazen* is somatic; the practice of non-thinking (Jpn. *hishiryō*)[92] via just sitting has the affective power to transform one's embodied dispositional tendencies (Skt. *samskāras*) whereby the dualistic distinction between foulness and purity dissolves (Nagatomo 1992). This standpoint concerning the somatic practice of *zazen* is supported by the teachings of the Sixth Patriarch of Zen, Hui-neng (638-713), which the *Caodong* lineage is a descendant of. In the *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch,* for example, Hui-neng states that the practice of *prajñā-pāramitā*, vis-à-vis meditation, conditions an embodied realization whereby the passions are themselves enlightenment.

> Being apart from environment and putting an end to birth and destruction is like going with the flow of the water. Thus it is called 'reaching the other shore,' in other words *pāramitā*. The deluded person recites it; the wise man practices with the mind. […] Those who awaken to this Dharma have awakened to the dharma of *prajñā* and are practicing the *prajñā* practice. If you do not practice it you are an ordinary person; if you practice for one instant of thought, your Dharma

[90] See *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya* (Fourth edition), trans. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikku Bodhi (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2009).
[91] See Shingennori Nagatomo, *Attunement through the Body*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).
[92] In Chapter six, I treat Dōgen's practice and phenomenology of non-thinking (Jpn. *hishiryō*) more closely.

> body will be the same as the Buddha's. Good friends, the very passions are themselves enlightenment. (*bodhi*). (Yampolsky 1967, 147-148)

With a foothold planted within this body-affirming standpoint, and by appealing to *tathāgatagarbha* teachings of the "Dharma-body" (Skt. *dharma-kāya*),[93] rather than viewing the body negatively, Dōgen views the body as the "whole universe," as a Dharma-body, as Buddha-nature. Roughly fourteen years after composing *Bendōwa*, Dōgen wrote *Sanjushichi-Bon-Bodai-Bunpo*, "Thirty-Seven Elements of Bodhi;" in this fascicle, he nondualistically overturns the idea that the body is foul, repulsive and impure:

> *The reflection that the body is not pure*: The individual bag of skin reflected as a body in the present is *the whole Universe in the ten directions*; because it is the real body, it is *the reflection that the body is not pure* springing up on the road of vivid action. If not for springing up, reflection would be impossible. […] Thus, [body reflection] is diamond-*samādhi* and *śūraṃgama-samādhi*, both of which are the reflection that the body is not pure" (Dōgen 1994, 2).

Reflecting upon this passage, Kim maintains that, "The human body, in Dōgen's view, was not a hindrance to the realization of enlightenment, but the very vehicle through which enlightenment was realized" (Kim 2004, 101). One can find other instances throughout the *Shōbōgenzō* where this perspective of embodiment is affirmed; for example, in *Shinjin-Gakudo*, "Learning the Truth With Body and Mind," Dōgen states:

> The body learning the truth" means learning the truth with the body, learning the truth with a mass of red flesh. The body derives from learning the truth, and what derives from learning the truth is, in every case, the body. *The whole Universe in ten directions is just the real human body. Living-and-dying, going-and-coming, are the real human body*. Using this body to quit the ten wrongs, to keep the eight precepts, to take refuge in the Three Treasures, and to give up a family and leave family life: this is real learning of the truth. On this basis, we speak of "*the real human body*. (Dōgen 1994, 253)

[93] Mahāyāna ideas concerning the nature of being a Buddha was systematized by the *Yogācārins* into a three-body philosophy (Skt. *Tri-kāya*) sometime around the fourth century CE: (1) Transformation Body (Skt. *Nirmāṇa-kāya*); (2) Enjoyment Body (Skt. *Sambhoga-kāya*); and (3) Dharma-Body (Skt. Dharma-kāya). In regards to (1) and (2), the *Nirmāṇa-kāya* refers to the bodies of earthly Buddhas, while the *Sambhoga-kāya* refers to, as Peter Harvey explains, "a refulgent subtle body of limitless form, endowed with the 'thirty-two characteristics of a Great Man', which is the product of 'merit' of a Bodhisattva's training (Harvey 1990, 126). The Dharma-kāya, according to Paul Williams, "is what the Buddha is in himself, what he really is, or in other words, it is generally the final, true, ultimate, reality or state of things" (Williams 1989, 101). In addition to the various *Tathāgatagarbha sūtras* that invite an exploration of this three-body philosophy, including the *Śrīmālādevīsimhanāda Sūtra*, the *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch* provides a polished looking-glass from a *Chan*/Zen vantage point.

Thus, the practice of *shinjin datsuraku*, whether on or off the meditation cushion, engenders a nondual realization whereby the body is neither inherently pure nor impure, nor is it an entity that is distinct from the mind. For Dōgen, *shinjin datsuraku*, vis-à-vis *zazen*, is the realization of 'the oneness of body and mind" (Jpn. *shinjin ichinyo*). Thus, in the fascicle *Bendōwa* Dōgen states, "Remember, in the Buddha-Dharma, because body and mind are originally one reality, the saying that essence and form are not two has been understood equally in the Western Heavens and Eastern Lands, and we should never dare to go against it. […] body and mind are not divided" (Dōgen 1994, 15).

By overcoming dualistic conceptions of body and mind, pure and impure, Dōgen seems to have realized a way by which the problem of original and acquired enlightenment dissolves; and, in doing so, he orients his own nondual interpretation of original enlightenment and Buddha-nature in a way that avoids the philosophical pitfalls of the Śenkia heresy referenced in *Bendōwa*.[94] According to Steven Heine, this heresy, "suggests that the integrated essence of the intangible mind or soul abides forever, while the evanescent body and other tangible forms of existence must perish" (Heine 2020, 23). Dōgen admonished this perspective by stating, "if we learn this view as the Buddha's Dharma, we are even more foolish than the person who grasps a tile or a pebble thinking it to be a golden treasure; the delusion would be too shameful for comparison. […] Knowing that this [wrong view] is just the wrong view of non-Buddhists, we should not touch it with our ears" (Dōgen 1994, 14-15). Instead of taking this dualistic standpoint, Dōgen proffers a nondualistic alternative: "body and mind are originally one reality" (Dōgen 1994, 15). Pivoting from this nondual perspective I contend that Dōgen intends to show that original and acquired enlightenment are not two, but rather one. In the *Shōbōgenzō* fascicle *Gyobutsu-Yuigi*, "The Dignified Behavior of Acting Buddha," Dōgen asserts that when a non-dual conception of

[94] As Jacqueline Stone explains, "Śenkia is said to have been a heterodox teacher, contemporary with the Buddha, who taught the existence of an immortal soul that reincarnates in successive bodies" (Stone 1999, 78). Dōgen's use of this name likely targeted one of his contemporaries vis-à-vis the informative and reformative periods of his life and monastic training. Drawing from the *Tendai* scholar Hazama Jikō, Stone notes that Dōgen's use of the Śenkia heresy may have been, "a veiled criticism of the idea of 'original no birth-and-death' (*hon mushōji*)," which is part of *Tendai* teachings (Stone 1999, 78). For Dōgen, what makes this idea a heresy is, "that it is setting forth a dualistic view in which the body is born and perishes while the mind constantly abides" (Stone 1999, 78).

"body-and-mind" is realized, the analytic problems associated with original enlightenment are no longer existentially vexing.

> As human consideration is short and small, so too is knowledge-based wisdom short and small. As a lifetime is short and pressed, so too is the intellect short and pressed – how could it fathom the dignified behavior of acting Buddha? […] They have never experienced the hearing of the Dharma through body-and-mind, and they have never possessed a body-and-mind that has practiced the truth. […] The assertion that acting Buddha is neither in love with original enlightenment nor in love with initiated enlightenment, and is beyond not having enlightenment and beyond having enlightenment, describes just this principle. Such [concepts] as mindfulness and being without mindfulness, or having enlightenment and being without enlightenment, or initiated enlightenment and original enlightenment, which are excitedly considered by the common men of today, are solely the excited consideration of the common man; they are not what has been transmitted and received from buddha to buddha. The 'mindfulness' of the common man and the mindfulness of the buddhas are far apart: never liken them. The common man's excited consideration of original enlightenment is as far apart as heaven and earth: they are beyond comparison. (Dōgen 1994, 41-42)

As I interpret this passage, Dōgen maintains that the problem of original enlightenment is a pseudo-problem born out of a 'truth-seeking' approach to Buddhism in general, Zen in particular. Like all pseudo-problems, they arise from our use of language, and the dualistic concepts we voice.[95] However, one ought not think that this passage shows that Dōgen wanted to discard the doctrine of original enlightenment altogether; indeed, he makes this point clear in the *Shōbōgenzō* fascicle *Busshō,* "Buddha-nature," which we will now turn our attention towards.

§ 3.4 *Buddha-nature, Temporality and Values*

Dōgen's nondual interpretation of the doctrine of original enlightenment in the fascicle *Busshō* is framed in light *Mahāparinirvāna Sūtra:*

> What is the point of the World-honored One's words that "*All living beings totally exist as Buddha-nature*"? It is the words "*This something ineffable coming like this*" turning the Dharma wheel. Those called "*living beings*," or called "*the sentient*," or called "*all forms of life*," or called "*all creatures*," are living beings and are all forms of Existence. In short, *Total Existence*

[95] In regards to acquired enlightenment, this standpoint is dualistic since it posits the distinction between means and ends, practice and realization. And, in regards to original enlightenment, while this standpoint attempts to express a nondual philosophy by negating the duality between means and ends, thereby defending the outlook that there is only the "ends" (i.e. original enlightenment), this view creates a higher level duality between itself and the dualistic standpoint of acquired enlightenment. Dōgen's nondualistic thinking, vis-à-vis emptiness, maintains that acquired and original enlightenment are one; there is no distinction between practice and enlightenment and/or Buddhahood (Jpn. *jōbutsu*).

> is the Buddha-nature, and the perfect totality of *Total Existence* is called "*living beings*." […] Remember, the *Existence* [described] now, which is *totally possessed* by the *Buddha-nature*, is beyond the "existence" of existence and non-existence. (Dōgen 1994, 2)

Dōgen's interpretation of Śākyamuni's words within this *sūtra* demonstrates his acumen as critical thinker when he states, "We should research that he does not say '*All living beings are the Buddha-nature itself*,' but says '*All living beings have the Buddha-nature*.' He needs to get rid of the *have* in *living beings have the Buddha-nature*" (Dōgen 1994, 22). Pivoting from the philosophy of emptiness, the word 'have' creates a duality between beings and Buddha-nature, and in turn, a duality between practice and attainment. Thus Dōgen characterizes this *tathāgatagarbha* philosophy as 'without Buddha-nature' (Jpn. *mu-busshō*), which can be understood to be equivalent to 'emptiness Buddha-nature' (Jpn. *kū-busshō*). As Hee-Jin Kim explains:

> What Dōgen tried to emphasize with the term "Buddha-nature of non-existence" is the emptiness of Buddha-nature, or the Buddha-nature of emptiness (*kū-busshō*), which at once transcended existence and non-existence. In his discourse on Buddha-nature, non-existence (*mu*) and emptiness (*ku*) went hand-in-hand; the former was always spoken in terms of the latter (Kim 2004, 133).

This nondual interpretation of Buddha-nature is woven throughout a good many fascicles that comprise the *Shōbōgenzō*, specifically those that treat metaphysical, epistemological, ethical and soteriological matters. Indeed, the subject matter of temporality and the Buddhist philosophy of impermanence (Skt. *anitya*) explored in the fascicle *Uji*, "Existence-Time," reveals his nondual standpoint all too well.[96] In this fascicle, Dōgen states, "Because [real] existence is only this exact moment, all moments of Existence-Time are the whole of time, and all Existent things and all Existent phenomena are moments of Time" (Dōgen 1994, 111). In this short passage, one can see how Dōgen's nondual perspective has been shaped by his training as *Tendai* monk, and his scholastic understanding of the *Hua-yen*[97] tradition (Jpn. *Kegon*),

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[96] For a good philosophical treatment of Dōgen's philosophy of Buddha-nature vis-à-vis time, see Joan Stambaugh, *Impermanence Is Buddha-Nature: Dōgen's Understanding of Temporality* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990).

[97] According to Paul Williams, the *Hua-yen* and *T'ien-t'ai* traditions defined the identity of Chinese Buddhist philosophy. Central to this identity was the idea of *dharmadhātu*, "Dharma-realm," as presented in the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. Williams states, "the *dharmadhātu* is the universe seen correctly, the quick-silver universe of the visionary perspective wherein all is empty and therefore is seen as a flow lacking hard edges. This is described by the sūtra as

particularly the "philosophy of totality"[98] as presented in the *Avataṃsaka*, "Flower Garland," *Sūtra*.[99] According to Dōgen, time is not an individual thing distinct from beings, and beings can only be understood through their temporal nature, vis-à-vis impermanence. Moreover, because all beings are empty of a self-essence (Skt. *svabhāva*), it follows that all moments of time are empty as well; thus, there

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a universe of radiance, luminosity with no shadows. […] This universe is the Buddha. At the same time what makes it this universe, what gives it the flow, is emptiness" (Williams 1989, 123). Philosophically, the idea of *dharmadhātu* reflects the logic of dependent co-origination (Skt. *pratītyasamutpāda*) and emptiness (Skt. *śūnyatā*), particularly when one considers the idea of mutual-interpenetration. As Peter Harvey explains, Fa-tsang (643-712 C.E.), "illustrated the interpenetration of all things by an image drawn from the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*: the jewel-net of the god Indra, wherein each jewel in the net reflects every other one, including their reflections of each jewel, and so on to infinity" (Harvey 1990, 119). In the context of Dōgen's non-dual perspective of time, "since the links of interdependence expand throughout the entire universe and at all time (past, present and future depend upon each other, which is to say the total *dharmadhātu* arises simultaneously), so in the totality of interdependence, the *dharmadhātu*, all phenomena are mutually penetrating and identical" (Williams 1989, 133). Herein, it is important to note that the phenomenal nature of beings mutually penetrating is not distinct from a noumenal world, nor emanating from such; this point is made clear in Fa-tsang's the *Golden Lion*. In it gold is a metaphor for noumenon (Ch. *li*) and the lion is the shape (Ch. *shih*). As Williams explains, "The Hua-yen noumenon, Fa-tsang's gold, however, is not something above and behind phenomena. Phenomena are not emanations from absolute noumenon. Rather, phenomena are noumenon – the lion is the gold, there is no gold behind the lion, the lion is not an emanation of gold. […] The phenomenal is the noumenal in phenomenal form" (Williams 1989, 131).

[98]The ontology of oneness which the "philosophy of totality" and the idea of the *dharmadhātu* is affirmed by other Chan/Zen thinkers within Dōgen's *Sōtō* (Ch. *Caodong*) lineage, including Hongzhi (1091-1157 C.E.). For example, consider his "Noninterference in the Matter of Oneness" which certainly reflects the nondual perspective of body-and-mind (Jpn. *shinjin ichinyo*) championed by Dōgen: "The matter of oneness cannot be learned at all. The essence is to empty and open out body and mind, as expansive as the great emptiness of space. Naturally in the entire territory all is satisfied. […] Body and mind are one suchness; outside this body there is nothing else. The same substance and the same function, one nature and one form, all faculties and all object-dusts are instantly transcendent" (Leighton and Wu 1991, 23-24). According to Paul Williams, *Hua-yen* thought provided, "the philosophical or doctrinal articulation of Chan (Zen) meditation" (Willams 1989, 127). More specifically in regards to disputes over gradual/acquired and sudden/original enlightenment, Williams maintains that, "Hua-yen, in common with much of East Asian Buddhism, particularly Chan, for which it provides a philosophical foundation, favors the teaching of sudden enlightenment. This is not only because the Buddha-nature, the One Mind, is already present, pure and radiant, untainted in all sentient beings, but also because the Hua-yen doctrines of identity and interpenetration entail that Buddhahood is already present at the first stage of the Bodhisattva's path to enlightenment. […] To Fa-tsang the Sudden Teaching was necessary because the noumenon, Suchness or Thusness, is beyond language and therefore beyond stages of practice, which have at the best a provisional validity. Practice cannot create a state of enlightenment which is not there already, and thus there can be no causal relationship between practice and enlightenment. In spite of this, there is no implication that in East Asian Buddhism those who hold the teaching of Sudden Enlightenment sit and wait for enlightenment to happen. Rather, moral and meditative practice bring out what one already is" (Williams 1989, 134-135).

[99] It is important to note that *Hua-yen* masters and scholars of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* draw from *Yogācāra* ideas, including, "the three natures, and the centrality of mind, in systematizing the Sūtra's message. The Dharma-realm seen as emptiness, thusness, the *Tathāgata-garbha*, and the one Mind of reality, pure, perfect and bright. It is true reality (Ch. *li*) which interpenetrates phenomena (Ch. *shih*) as they do each other. Phenomena are empty, but are not unreal; for they are no different from li. Emptiness is seen, not just as the antidote to all views, but as the ground for a positive appreciation of the concrete realities of nature, as part of a harmonious organic unity. In tune with the Chinese love of harmony and nature, every item of existence is seen as worthy of respect and honor; for all is the 'body' of Vairocana Buddha" (Harvey 1990, 120).

is no ontological foundation or ground by which we can ultimately distinguish one moment of Existence-Time from another moment of Existence-Time. For Dōgen, all Existence-Time is mutually interpenetrating (Jpn. *sōsoku-sōnyū*), despite the fact, in light of points made above, that such penetration is partially concealed do to the fact that one's temporal experiences are always tied to their subjectivity.

> Each individual and each object in this whole Universe should be glimpsed as individual moments of Time. Object does not hinder object in the same way that moment of Time does not hinder moment of Time. […] When we arrive in the field of the ineffable, there is just one [concrete] thing and one [concrete] phenomenon, here and now, [beyond] understanding of phenomena and non-understanding of phenomena, and [beyond] understanding of things and non-understanding of things. […] The three heads and eight arms pass instantly as my Existence-Time; though they seem to be in the distance, they are [moments of] the present. The sixteen-foot or eight-foot [golden body] also passes instantly as my Existence-Time; though it seems to be yonder, it is [moments of] the present. This being so, pine trees are Time, and bamboos are Time. (Dōgen 1994, 110-111)

This non-dual perspective of time helps shape Dōgen's normative perspective, particularly his metaethical writings in the fascicle *Shoaku Makusa*,[100] "Not Committing Wrongs;" therein he states, "Right and Wrong are Time; Time is not Right or Wrong. Right and Wrong are the Dharma; the Dharma is not Right or Wrong" (Dōgen 1994, 99). Indeed, what is noteworthy about this passage is that according to the standpoint of metaethical realism, right and wrong, good and bad, are not only believed to be mind-independent, but also timeless, in that they are not vulnerable to change. Based upon our aforementioned treatment of Dōgen's writings on Buddha-nature and time (i.e. *ji-busshō*), Dōgen seems to be maintaining the opposite standpoint, mainly that good and bad, right and wrong, are temporal, thereby rendering value judgments contingent, vis-à-vis moments of Existence-Time. What this means is that Dōgen's standpoint concerning Buddha-nature and temporality positions his philosophy within the metaethical camp of anti-realism.[101]

[100] In *Shoaku Makusa*, we find the same *Hua-yen* 'philosophy of totality' that is present in both *Busshō* and *Uji*. For example: "Someone who comes to know a single particle knows the whole universe, and someone who has penetrated one real dharma has penetrated the myriad dharmas. Someone who has not penetrated the myriad dharmas has not penetrated one real dharma" (Dōgen 1994, 107).

[101] Herein, as I noted in the previous chapter, my interpretation of Dōgen parallels Guilbault's.

I would like to bring closure to this treatment of Buddha-nature and time, vis-à-vis soteriological values, by further situating such within his 'open-handed' perspective noted in the previous section. Contrary to the *Caodong* masters of China, Dōgen did not champion the soteriological perspective of complete enlightenment; such a perspective, as his writings show, is dualistic. Again, as he states in *Genjō Kōan*, "While we are experiencing one side, we are blind to the other side" (Dōgen 1994, 34). Dōgen's philosophy of Buddha-nature echoes this non-dualistic value judgment:

> The venerable One has preached the Buddha-nature for others far and wide, innumerable times, and now we have quoted just one such example. "If you want to realize Buddha-nature, you must first get rid of selfish pride." We should intuit and affirm the point of this preaching without fail. It is not that there is no realization; realization is just getting rid of selfish pride. (Dōgen 1994, 15-16)

For Dōgen, realization of Buddha-nature is not a consequence of overcoming and getting rid of delusion; instead, the realization of Buddha-nature is nothing other than the practice of overcoming selfish pride and delusion itself (i.e. incomplete enlightenment). Herein, the soteriological values of enlightenment and delusion, vis-à-vis good and bad, are not essentially real; they are not, as the standpoint of anti-realism maintains, mind-independent. Such anti-realism, vis-à-vis soteriological values, is resoundingly echoed in the fascicle *Daigo*, "Great Realization:"

> "A person in the state of great realization" is not intrinsically in great realization and is not hoarding a great realization realized externally. It is not that, in old age, [the person] meets with a great realization [already] present in the public world. [People of great realization] do not forcibly drag it out of themselves, but they unfailingly realize the great realization. We do not see "not being deluded" as great realization. (Dōgen 1994, 86)

In this passage, Dōgen is stating that: (1) the realization of 'great realization' is not an inherent or permanent state one can enter into; (2) 'great realization' does not exist in the external world independent from one's mind; and (3) 'great realization' is not independent of being 'deluded.' Thus, the practice of 'great realization,' according to Dōgen, is itself the illumination of delusion; hence the oft cited passage from *Genjō Kōan*, "Those who greatly realize delusion are buddhas. Those who are greatly deluded about realization are ordinary beings" (Dōgen 1994, 33). Herein, the key takeaway from these passages is that, similar to original and acquired enlightenment, the dualism between delusion and 'great realization'

is born out from our language; "while we are experiencing one side, we are blind to the other side" (Dōgen 1994, 34). Accordingly, if one reads between the lines of these fascicles, it becomes clear that Dōgen is encouraging his audience to "not think" (Jpn. *fushiryō*) about delusion and realization as if they are dualistically opposed; instead, one should just practice *zazen*, via non-thinking (Jpn. *hishiryō*) about delusion and 'great realization,' and thereby recognize that, "A person getting realization is like the moon being reflected in water: the moon does not get wet, and the water is not broken" (Dōgen 1994, 35).[102]

§ 3.5 *Anti-Consequentialism: Rethinking Skillful Means*

In the previous chapter we saw that the bodhisattva ideal and the doctrine of skillful means (Skt. *upāya*) is central to Mahāyāna ethics. So much so that Charles Goodman interprets Mahāyāna ethics, vis-à-vis Indian and Tibetan Buddhism, as consequentialist; and, in the context of Dōgen's ethics, Bret Davis, maintains that consequentialism helps explain Dōgen's affirmation of the *bodhisattva* ideal, vis-à-vis the teleological goal to ameliorate suffering. However, based upon Dōgen's philosophical standpoint on original enlightenment (Jpn. *hongaku)* and his nondual perspective of practice and realization explored throughout this chapter, I contend that consequentialism does not accurately capture Dōgen's interpretation of the *bodhisattva* ideal and the doctrine of skillful means (Jpn. *zengyō hōben*). In other words, just as Dōgen's reevaluation of original enlightenment obliterates the dualism between practice and realization, it also obliterates the dualism between the means and ends, vis-à-vis normative actions. Accordingly, since consequentialism is predicated upon firm dualistic distinctions between means and ends, it follows that consequentialism fails to capture Dōgen's philosophy of skillful means and interpretation of the *bodhisattva* ideal.

[102] In Chapter six, I examine the distinction between thinking (Jpn. *shiryō*), not thinking (Jpn. *fushiryo*) and non-thinking (Jpn. *hishiryō*) in closer detail as I lay out a case for interpreting zazen as a normative practice for justifying conventional value judgments. Herein, the moon, which is a metaphor for Buddha-nature, shining in the water while not getting wet avoids the dualistic view that Buddha-nature is something inside us (i.e. it does not get wet); and, the water not being disturbed by the moon's reflection reveals and conceals the non-obstructing relationship between buddha-nature and the embodied existence of all beings.

Dōgen's reevaluation of the doctrine of skillful means is framed in light of his *sūtra* learning, specifically Kumārajīva's translation of the *Lotus Sūtra* (Skt. *Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra*; Jpn. *Myōhō renge kyō*) which he widely quotes or alludes to (Nishijima 1994).[103] Dōgen's studies of the *Lotus Sūtra,* which began as a *Tendai* monk at Mt. Hiei, influenced his interpretation of original enlightenment;[104] and, because his Zen practice reshaped his understanding of original enlightenment, it is warranted to infer that his Zen practice reshaped his understanding of the teachings in the *Lotus Sūtra*, including the doctrine of skillful means. According to Hee-Jin Kim, the doctrine of skillful means, within Mahāyāna Buddhism in general, has a two-fold meaning:

> Skillful means signifies the buddhas' and celestial bodhisattvas' compassionate means, expedients, and stratagems used to liberate sentient beings–by analogy, the teacher's pedagogical methods to guide his/her students. At the same time, the notion also includes those methods and practices employed by sentient beings (and aspiring bodhisattvas) to attain spiritual realization. This two-fold meaning of skillful means–one is the buddhas'/celestial bodhisattvas' accommodative move for the liberation of sentient beings, and the other is sentient beings'/aspiring bodhisattvas' aspirational move toward their salvific goal–developed hand-in-hand early on in the history of the Mahāyāna in various sutras and śāstras. (Kim 2007, 30)

My anti-consequentialist interpretation of Dōgen's perspective, vis-à-vis the doctrine of skillful means, builds upon Kim's research and position; mainly, "Dōgen's critical assessment of the doctrine" is best understood, "in the context of the unity of practice and realization" (Kim 2007, 31).

Dōgen takes up the subject matter of skillful means as presented in the *Lotus Sūtra* in the fascicle *Hokke-Ten-Hokke*, "The Flower of Dharma Turns the Flower of Dharma." In this fascicle, Dōgen treats the parable of the burning house, whereby three sons of a wealthy man who are unaware that they are trapped in a burning house as they are preoccupied and absorbed in playing games. Herein, the father is able to skillfully lure them out of the house by offering them goat carriages, deer carriages and ox

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[103] According to Steven Heine, "there are several hundred instances," within the *Shōbōgenzō*, "in which Dōgen quotes or alludes to passages culled from the *Lotus Sūtra*" (Heine, 2020, 163)

[104] As Jacqueline Stone explains, "In medieval Tendai texts, the triple-bodied Tathāgata of the *Lotus Sūtra* is typically referred to as 'spontaneous' or 'unproduced' (*musa sanjin*). The term *musa* in Chinese T'ien-t'ai texts originally designated 'ultimate reality that is beyond conceptualization and verbal distinctions.' In the medieval Japanese Tendai tradition, it assumed the additional connotations of 'natural' or 'just as it is'–in short, a synonym for original enlightenment. (Stone 1999, 185)

carriages (Williams 1989). According to Paul Williams, the meaning of this parable is not hard to discern. "The father is the Buddha. The burning house is the house of *saṃsāra* within which sentient beings, absorbed in their playthings, are trapped. The Buddha offers various vehicles (*yānas*) as bribes, according to the tastes of sentient beings" (Williams 1989, 148). In regards to the doctrine of skillful means, it is the consequences of getting the children out of the house that is normatively significant, not the means of bribery per se. According to Steven Heine, Dōgen's treatment of the 'burning house' parable from the *Lotus Sūtra* emphasizes the nonduality of delusion and awakening (Heine 2020). For example, consider his concluding statement in *Hokke-Ten-Hokke:*

> In conclusion, in the hundreds of years since this Sūtra was transmitted into China, to be turned as the Flower of Dharma, very many people, here and there, have produced their commentaries and interpretations. […] Because the Flower of Dharma is from kalpa to kalpa, and because the Flower of Dharma is from noon to night, even though our own body-and-mind grows strong and grows weak, it is just the Flower of Dharma itself. The reality that exists as it is a treasure, is brightness, is a seat of truth, is wide, profound, and eternal, is profound, is great, and everlasting, is mind in delusion, the Flower of Dharma turning, and is mind in realization, turning the Flower of Dharma, which is really just the Flower of Dharma turning the Flower of Dharma. (Dōgen 1994, 220)

Herein, delusion, vis-à-vis Flower of Dharma turning, is itself realization, vis-à-vis turning the Flower of Dharma. More specifically in regards to a *bodhisattva's* strategy to liberate sentient beings (i.e. skillfully lure them out of the burning house), Dōgen states: "There is mental delusion in the burning house, there is mental delusion just at the gate itself, there is mental delusion outside the gate, there is metal delusion just in front of the gate, and there is mental delusion within the gate. Mental delusion has created 'within the gate' and 'outside the gate' and even the 'gate itself,' 'the burning house,' and so on" (Dōgen 1994, 211). According to Gudo Nishijima, 'the gate' symbolizes the skillful practices and methods of leading one from delusion to realization. Accordingly, when Dōgen poses the following rhetorical question, "Should we reach the conclusion that the gate itself is merely a place of momentary passing?" (Dōgen 1194, 211), he is, according to Nishijima, denying means-ends consequentialist reasoning. Such denial, vis-à-vis the doctrine of skillful means, is further evidenced in a subsequent passage from the same fascicle:

> So should we think that our own form and nature now are originally practicing in this world of Dharma, or should we think that they are originally practicing in atoms? They are without alarm

> and doubt, and without fear; they are simply the profound and eternal state which is original practice as the Flower of Dharma turning. This seeing atoms and seeing the world of Dharma is beyond conscious action and conscious consideration. Conscious consideration, and conscious action too, should learn Flower of Dharma consideration, and should learn Flower Dharma of action. (Dōgen 1994, 214)

As I interpret this passage, Dōgen's use of 'conscious action' refers to a normative emphasis upon the action itself (i.e. deontology), whereas his use of 'conscious consideration' refers to a normative emphasis upon the consequences (i.e. consequentialism). According to Dōgen, the practice of the 'Flower of Dharma' is beyond this the dualistic distinction between means and ends; the dualistic distinction between actions and consequences does not, from his Zen perspective, apply to the doctrine of skillful means within the *Lotus Sūtra* (i.e. Flower of Dharma). Instead, following Kim's lead, this passage reveals that, "the means and the end should be treated as a pair of foci" (Kim 2007, 31-32); hence, "Conscious consideration, and conscious action too, should learn Flower of Dharma consideration, and should learn Flower Dharma of action" (Dōgen 1994, 214).

According to Kim, Dōgen was critical of the consequentialist perspective the doctrine of skillful means engenders; "Perhaps the doctrine's most disconcerting aspect, from Dōgen's perspective, is that it treats any skillful action, speech, and thought as a temporary expedient for a higher end […] in accordance with a teleological and hierarchical way of thinking" (Kim 2007, 31). In light of his critical standpoint on original enlightenment (Jpn. *hongaku*), and his nondual philosophy of practice and realization, "The teaching of skillful means has less to do with provisional expedients than it does with practice and study in and through the entire world of the ten directions" (Kim 2007, 31). Based upon this nondualistic interpretation, "the means, hitherto merely instrumental and provisional, is now thoroughly revalorized as the very core of the end. […] The traditional dualism of the means and the end is recast as a pair of foci in place of opposites" (Kim 2007, 32).

Thus, I do not think consequentialism, as Davis suggests, is a promising characterization of Dōgen's normative perspective, vis-à-vis the vows of the bodhisattva; instead, I contend that Dōgen's anti-consequentialist interpretation of the doctrine of skillful means is more fruitfully approached in light

of his metaethical perspective, which we will begin exploring in subsequent chapters of this dissertation. In regards to the doctrine of skillful means, I plan to show how his metaethics, vis-à-vis 'not committing' (Jpn. *makusa*), which I begin unpacking in Chapter five, and the practice of *zazen*, vis-à-vis non-thinking (Jpn. *hishiryō*), which I explore in Chapter six, allows for Dōgen to provide a new interpretation that is in keeping with the East Asian philosophy of non-action (Ch. *wu-wei*); hence the capping phrase, "Great action adapts totally; in the Great Way there are no skillful means" (Jpn. *Dai ˹ki˺ ennō, daidō muhō*) (ZS 8.267). This philosophy, which is central to both Confucianism[105] and Daoism,[106] is how, "Dōgen freshens old bottles with new wine" (Kim 2007, 32). In short, non-action neither affirms the action itself, nor the consequences, as the basis for justifying and evaluating normative behavior. As an effortless mode of action, the action itself and the consequences are a pair of foci rather than a set of opposites. Thus, for Dōgen, what defines the nature of a bodhisattva's actions is, rather than consequentialist reasoning, effortlessness, vis-à-vis non-duality of wisdom and compassion. Such effortlessness, as we shall see in later chapters, is captured by colorful metaphors such as, "Like a person's hand in the middle of the night searching behind for the pillow," (Jpn. *Hito no yahan ni haishu shite chinsu o saguru ga gotoshi*) (ZS 9.21); herein this capping phrase illustrates an effortless act whereby one does not 'consciously consider' the distinction between subject and object, means and ends.

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[105] In Confucianism, non-action (Ch. *wu-wei*) is closely associated with governance. Consider, for example, the following from Book XV of *The Analects*: "The Master said, 'If there was a ruler who achieved order without taking any action, it was, perhaps, Shun. There was nothing for him to do but to hold himself in a respectful posture and to face due south," (Lau 1979, 132). Herein, non-action vis-à-vis facing south is an allusion to the Pole Star, which is referenced in Book II, "The Master said, 'The rule of virtue can be compared to the Pole Star which commands the homage of the multitude of stars without leaving its place'" (Lau 1979, 63). The image of the Pole Star, thus orchestrating the heavenly motions of the cosmos, captures the effortless quality of acting, via non-action.

[106] Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching* provides a number of references to non-action (Ch. *wu-wei*) to characterize the comportment and behavior of sages and rulers. For example:

> Without stirring abroad
> One can know the whole world;
> Without looking out the window
> One can see the way of Heaven.
> The further one goes
> The less one knows.
> Therefore the sage knows without having to stir,
> Identifies without having to see,
> Accomplishes without having to act" (Lau 1963, 54)

For reasons noted above, I contend that Dōgen would likely dismiss 'trolley problem' thought experiments which attempt to isolate the consequences of our actions apart from the action itself. In fact, I contend that he would likely think that such thought experiments do very little to improve our normative beliefs and behavior. Rather than 'thought experiments' involving trolleys, bridges and obese men, he would likely stand by his advocacy for 'experiment thinking' via *zazen* so as to realize a normative perspective whereby normative reasoning, vis-à-vis non-thinking (Jpn. *hishiryō*), is not fettered to action-based principles, such as 'the ends justify the means.' Such principles, as I interpret Dōgen, conceal more than what they reveal. "Dōgen suggests that the very texture of the Buddha-dharma is comprised of passions and desires, conflicts and differences. Reason cannot exist by freeing itself from such realities of the human condition any more than these realities can exist independently of the counsel of reason" (Kim 2007, 73). Thus, to think that action-based principles can determine what makes actions right independent of the context, and one's embodied situation, is a limited normative perspective, similar to "sitting in a well looking at the sky" (Jpn. *I ni za shite ten o miru*) (ZS 4.42); indeed, from the bottom of the well, far too much of the 'normative sky' remains concealed.

§3.6 *Concluding Remarks*

In this chapter I provided a general sketch of Dōgen's life and philosophy in order to set up an inquiry into his metaethical perspective which will be carried out in subsequent chapters of this dissertation. I first considered how the cultural climate of the Kamakura period, along with his studies and training as a *Tendai* monk, shaped his practice of doing philosophy. More specifically, I showed how the Mahāyāna doctrine of original enlightenment (Jpn. *hongaku*) motivated his pursuit to practice Zen, which in turn led to his journey to China where he received dharma transmission from Master Rujing of the *Caodong* (Jpn. *Sōtō*) lineage. From this historical review, I was able to show how Dōgen's Zen perspective, which he returned to Japan with empty-handed, provided a new clearing within the philosophical horizon of the doctrine of original enlightenment, vis-à-vis Buddha-nature, which in turn allowed for an alternative outlook on zen practice, vis-à-vis silent illumination, that was different from

other masters and practitioners within the *Caodong* lineage. In short, what is unique about Dōgen's alternative perspective is that: (1) the distinction between original enlightenment and acquired enlightenment is a pseudo-problem born out of the use of language; (2) enlightenment is never complete nor dualistically opposed to delusion (i.e. incomplete enlightenment); and (3) the body is affirmed as the vehicle for realizing 'great realization' and thereby actualizing Buddha-nature. From there, I explored Dōgen's philosophy of Buddha-nature in light of his philosophy of time; a philosophy, as I noted, which was deeply influenced by *Hua-yen* metaphysics. This inquiry provided a general framework for seeing how Dōgen's metaethical outlook is in keeping with anti-realism, whereby there are no mind-independent values that are timeless. As my reference to the fascicle *Shoaku Makusa* illustrated, good and bad, right and wrong are contextually relative to time, and the temporal conditions beings find themselves within. Finally, I was able to show how Dōgen's reevaluation of original enlightenment and non-dual interpretation of delusion and realization/awakening informs his reevaluation of the doctrine of skillful means, particularly how it is presented in the *Lotus Sūtra*. Accordingly, I showed how Charles Goodman's consequentialist interpretation of skillful means cannot be extended to Dōgen as Bret Davis attempts to do, albeit only in regards to the bodhisattva ideal.

In the next chapter, I develop this anti-realist interpretation of Dōgen's metaethics further by exploring his characterization of normative values as 'uncreated' (Jpn. *mushō*). By doing such, we will then find ourselves on secure footing for making the case that anti-cognitivism is a fruitful metaethical counterpart to anti-realism in regards to clarifying what our conventional value judgments mean: conventional normative propositions are not reducible to feelings and attitudinal leanings, nor are they erroneously fictitious, but instead they reveal and conceal perspectives

Chapter Four

Dōgen's 'Uncreated' Metaethic

§4.1 *Chapter Overview*

The objective of this chapter is to examine Dōgen's metaethical characterization of values as 'uncreated (Jpn. *mushō*). This characterization is proffered in the *Shōbōgenzō* fascicle *Shoaku-Makusa*, "Not Doing Evil," which is specifically devoted to ethics. I plan to argue that this characterization is in keeping with the Mahāyāna philosophy of emptiness, whereby all things, as well as truth claims, are ultimately devoid of an inherent essence and/or self-nature, notwithstanding the fact that we consider such to be conventionally meaningful. For Dōgen, because emptiness is the ultimate nature of all things, moral values and principles are ultimately 'uncreated.' I contend that this characterization reveals Dōgen's general commitment to anti-realism. While there is a plurality of anti-realist perspectives, it is not my intention to limit Dōgen to a specific version of anti-realism (e.g., error theory, fictionalism or non-cognitivism) but rather emphasize that, according to Dōgen, there are no mind-independent values that objectively exist and/or are universally true. As we shall see, this anti-realist standpoint sets the stage for making sense of Dōgen's metaethical perspective as anti-cognitivist (i.e. moral propositions do not describe moral facts nor express moral truths, but instead, reveal a perspective) specifically in regards to the practice of non-thinking (Jpn. *hishiryō*), vis-à-vis the phenomenology and an embodied practice of *zazen*, seated meditation.

§4.2 Zen Metaethics: Mushō

According to early Buddhist thought, all things, actions or events can be evaluated as good, bad or indifferent. Dōgen begins his examination of this tripartite moral division in his fascicle *Shoaku-Makusa* by citing a verse from the *Āgama's* and the *Dhammapada* that is believed to be a "universal precept" of the patriarchs and Buddhas: "Avoid all evil, cultivate the good, purify your mind: this sums up the teaching of the Buddhas" (Easwaran 1986, 132).

Not doing evils,

devoutly practicing every good,

purifying one's own mind:

this is the teachings of all buddhas. (Dōgen 2011,15)

This verse is then followed by the following passage:

> In the above quotation the term "evils" refers to [what is called] morally evil among the categories of morally good, morally evil, and morally undefined. Its moral nature, however, is uncreated. The natures of morally good and morally undefined likewise are uncreated. They are untainted, they are the real aspects, which is to say that these three categories of moral nature encompass manifold varieties of dharmas. (Dōgen 2011,157)

To begin making sense of this passage we can begin by considering Bodiford's translation of *mushō* –無生– as "uncreated." For starters, this is not the only translation. Gudo Nishijima and Chodo Cross translate *mushō* as "non-appearance," and Shasta Abbey translates *mushō* as "does not arise and perish." Since different translations reveal and conceal different interpretations, it is important to critically consider the characters that make up this key concept in Dōgen's moral philosophy.

Mushō is comprised of two characters: (1) *mu* (無), which can be translated as nothing, or as a negation, such as not one, not two; and (2) *shō* (生), which means to be born, or to originate. Based upon a literal translation of these characters, the term *mushō* means "not born," or "not created." Of the three aforementioned translations, William Bodiford's translation seems most consistent with the literal meaning of the characters. To say something is "uncreated" is not entirely different from saying something is "not born;" the meaning is generally the same. Moreover, Bodiford's translation echoes Theravāda Buddhism's characterization of *nirvāṇa* (Pāli *nibbāna*) as unborn (Pāli *ajātaṃ*); for example, in the *Ariyapariyesanā Sutta*. "The Noble Search," it states, "Then, bhikkus, being myself subject to birth, having understood the danger in what is subject to birth, seeking the unborn supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna, I attained the unborn supreme security of from bondage, Nibbāna" (Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 2009, 259). Within the context of Mahāyāna Buddhism, Nāgārjuna's dedicatory verse in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārika*, "The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way," includes "unborn" (Skt.

anutpādam) as a characterization of phenomena that are dependently conditioned (Skt. *pratītyasamutpādaṃ*):

> I prostrate to the Perfect Buddha,
> The best of teachers, who taught that
> Whatever is dependently arisen is
> Unceasing, unborn. (Garfield 1995, 2)

Notwithstanding this *Madhyamaka* characterization of dependently arisen phenomena, the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, which draws upon the Mahāyāna persepctives of Yogācāra and Buddha-nature, equivocates the doctrine of emptiness (Skt. *śūnyatā*) with the idea of being 'unborn'; "Again Mahāmati, what is meant by emptiness of self-nature? Mahāmati, it is that all things in their self-nature are unborn, hence the emptiness of self-nature, and it is therefore said that things are empty in their self-nature" (Suzuki 1932, 66). Thus, we shall rely upon Bodiford's translation of *mushō* as 'uncreated' for the remainder of the dissertation while we explore different translations of Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō*, including those of Nishijima and Cross, Parkes and Bielefeldt.

The first point to note about Bodiford's translation of *mushō* is that it invites conflicting philosophical interpretations. From an essentialist perspective, if something is 'uncreated' then it is permanent and eternal. In Western philosophy, 'God' is characterized by Aquinas as an uncaused being, which implies that 'God' is 'uncreated. In early Buddhist philosophy, space (Skt. *ākāśa*) and *nirvāṇa*, according to *Sarvastivada Abhidharma* philosophy, are conceived through a similar essentialist lens; space and *nirvāṇa* are not dependently originated, but rather permanent, thus "uncreated." However, there is good reason to believe that Dōgen does not share this essentialist perspective.

As I noted in the previous chapter, Dōgen is a Zen thinker situated within East Asian Mahāyāna Buddhism; his perspective is informed by his early education in Chinese classics and sūtra studies at, "the Senkōbō at Yokawa-Hannyadani on Mt. Hiei, one of the most renowned centers of Buddhist studies at the time" (Kim 2004, 20). After being ordained a *Tendai* monk at Enryakuji on Mt. Hiei in 1213, Dōgen

continued to engage in a systematic study of Buddhist *sūtras* at the Senkōbō (Kim 2004); these *sūtras* included the *Flower Garland Sūtra* (Jpn. *Kegonkyō*), *Lotus Sūtra* (Jpn. *Hokkekyō*), *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* (Jpn. *Nehangyō*) (Heine 2020). The multivalent teachings embedded within these sutras are born out of the philosophical streams of East Asian *Madhyamaka,*[107] *Yogācāra*[108] *– Vijñaptimātra,* 'Consciousness-Only School,' or *Cittamātra,* 'Mind-Only'– and the *Tathāgatagarbha*[109] tradition. Two ideas embedded within these Mahāyāna perspectives worth considering in order to clarify Dōgen's perspective include: (1) the two truths; and (2) the philosophy of emptiness (Skt. *śūnyatā*).

Beginning with (2), while there are differences between how *Madhyamaka* and *Yogācāra* interpret the meaning of emptiness, it can be broadly construed as a philosophy of non-essentialism. In regard to *Madhyamaka* for example, emptiness refers to the emptiness of individual dharmas; herein, there are no phenomenal things or ideas that have an individual/independent self-nature (Skt. *svabhāva*) simply because all things and ideas are dependently conditioned and impermanent. In regards to *Yogācāra*, emptiness refers to the nondual and ineffable relationship between subject and object. Herein,

[107] In regards to the East Asian *Madhyamaka*, which is generally known as the 'Three Treatise School', there are three main philosophical treatises that helped shape the teachings of Buddhist traditions, including the *Tendai* school which Dōgen began his monastic training. "The Chung lun (*Madhyamaka Śāstra*) consists of Nāgārjuna's *Madhyamakakārikā* embedded in a commentary said to be by an Indic teacher whose name in Chinese is give as Ch'ing-mu. […] The Shih-erh-men lun (*Dvadaśamukha)* appears in the mainto be a collection of verses drawn from Nāgārjuna with a commentary attributed by some to Nāgārjuna and by others to the elusive Ch'ing-mu. The Pai-lun (*Śata Śāstra*) is a work by Aryadeva, with a commentary by another obscure figure, Vasu. […] Sometimes Ta-chih-tu lun (*Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra*) is added to the three Treatises, producing a Four Treatise School. This text is attributed to Nāgārjuna. (Williams 1989, 74)

[108] In regards to *Yogācāra* or*Vijñaptimātra* (Ch. *Fǎxiàng-zōng;* Jpn. *Hossō-shū*), while less influential than the 'Three Treatise School,' the *She-lun* and *Fa-hsiang* schools of *Cittamātra* provided nuanced persepctives concerning the division between eight types of consciousness, "including the five sense consciousnesses plus the mind (*manovijñāna*) – a sense which on the one hand apprehends psychic events, and on the other synthesizes experiences supplied by the other five senses – the 'tainted mind' (*kliṣṭamanas*), and the substratum consciousness" (Williams 1989, 90). Herein, the substratum consciousness (Skt. *ālayavijñāna*) can be seen as repository for the 'seeds' (Skt. *bīja*) which condition the phenomenal existence of the external world, as well as one's personal experiences vis-à-vis karma (Williams 1989). In China, the main text of this philosophical tradition was a translation of Vasubandhu's *Triṃśikā- vijñaptimātratā, "*Thirty Verses on Manifestation Only" (Ch. *Wéishí sānshí lùn sòng*; Jpn. *Yuishiki sanjūronju*).

[109] And, in regards to *Thathāgatagarbha*, 'Buddha-nature,' this tradition emphasized the realization of, "one's spiritual potential, exhortation, and encouragement, not ontology" (Williams 2000, 162). Accordingly, "In China Fa-tsang in the seventrh century claimed that *tathāgatagarbha* tradition represents a fourth turning of the Dharma-wheel. In other words, the *tathāgatagarbha* tradition represents a different philosophical and ontological position from *Madhyamaka* and *Yogācāra* (Williams 2000, 162).

as a form of idealism, *Yogācāra* defends the oneness of subject and object by denying the existence of matter and corporeality (Skt. *rūpa*) (Siderits 2007, 147).

Turning our attention to the two truths, conventional truth (Skt. *saṁvṛiti-satya*) and ultimate truth (Skt. *paramārtha-satya*), it is important to note that these truths, as interpreted from a Mahāyāna standpoint, are different from early Buddhism's perspective. According to early Buddhism, "A statement is conventionally true if and only if it is acceptable to common sense and consistently leads to successful practice;" on the other hand, "A statement is ultimately true if and only if it corresponds to the facts and neither asserts nor presupposes the existence of any conceptual fiction" (Siderits 2007, 56). In the context of the Mahāyāna philosophy of emptiness, particularly *Madhymaka's* interpretation of such, the two truths become more nuanced. In short, because all conventional statements are dependently conditioned, it follows that all statements are ultimately empty. That being said, this does not mean that emptiness is something that can be discovered or realized singly and/or independently from that of conventional truths; emptiness too, because of its dependency upon conventional statements and beliefs, is empty (i.e. emptiness of emptiness, *śūnyatā śūnyatā*). Following Siderits' interpretation of this *Madhyamaka* standpoint, the ultimate truth is that there are no ultimate truths; instead, there are only conventional truths.

> To call emptiness a 'dependent concept' is to say that it lacks intrinsic nature. And of course no statements about something that lacks intrinsic nature (such as a chariot) can be ultimately true. So nothing we can say about emptiness can be ultimately true. But likewise no statement about non-empty things, things with intrinsic natures, is ultimately true either. […] To say all things are empty is to say that there is nothing that is the kind of thing that ultimately true statements would be statements about. To say that emptiness is also empty is to say that no statement about emptiness could be ultimately true either. The upshot is that the very idea of an ultimate truth is empty. (Siderits 2007, 204)

I contend that this interpretation of the two truths is most effective for exploring Dōgen's writings on emptiness, ethics and the metaethical status of moral propositions.

While Dōgen does not expound upon the distinction of the two truths, it is evident that they are embedded throughout the *Shōbōgenzo*. In the fascicle *Osakusendaba*, for example, he shines light on the

conventional nature of language by querying a legend found in the *Mahābhārata* whereby a king of a land called *Saindhava* requests four separate items from his retainers -salt, chalice, water and horse – yet all of which have the same name, *saindhava*. Depending upon the situation, the word *saindhava* has different meanings which are determined by the interests of the speaker, in this case the king. Speaking metaphorically, Dōgen states that the seeking of *saindhava* is "not the state of people playing stringed instruments with bridges glued" (Dōgen 1994, 105). As Nishijima explains, playing a string instrument like the *koto* with bridges glued symbolizes blind adherence to fixed rules or ideas. To have one's bridges glued is to be inflexible and insensitive to the context and needs of any given situation. Rather than having our bridges glued, we should recognize that the meaning of our words are contextual; and, that the context and interests at hand determine the subject-predicate relations we use. If the king is thirsty, and requests *saindhava*, then the retainers bring the king water. If the king desires to go on a tour through the countryside, then the word *saindhava* refers to a horse. The meaning of our conventional words and expressions, like *saindhava*, are determined by their relationship to the situation and their ability to serve our mutual interests rather than denoting some correspondent essence/truth. Ultimately, because all dualistic distinctions that result from language are empty, such truths are not mind-independent. Herein, emptiness simply highlights that the things that we take to be real, either in a metaphysical, epistemological or ethical sense are, ultimately, not real (i.e. anti-realism).

For a Zen thinker like Dōgen, this "empty epistemology" is perhaps best captured by the logic of nonduality and the formula "A is, ~ A, therefore A." Non-duality for Dōgen, as Kim explains, does not entail a transcendence of dualism to a non-dual horizon of understanding and truth, but rather a realization of dualism itself (Kim 2007, 32-34). For example, "A is ~ A ∴ A" could be replaced with the traditional Zen verse: "At first mountains are mountains and rivers are rivers, then mountains are not mountains and rivers are not rivers; finally, mountains are mountains and rivers are rivers" (Hori 2000, 301). This verse reflects various points of realization that Zen practitioners experience when they embark upon the path of Zen. At the beginning of one's practice, one views the world through a conceptual looking glass of

essentialism whereby mountains have an essence that is distinct from rivers. However, after studying Buddhist teachings, particularly the philosophy of emptiness, for an unspecified duration of time, one realizes that mountains and rivers lack an independent self-nature or essence; thus there are no mountains and there are no rivers. But then, after some additional practice and philosophical rumination, one discovers that the negation of mountains of rivers conditions a view of "no mountains, no rivers" which is dualistically distinct from the view that was previous held, mainly "mountains are mountains, and, rivers are rivers." Accordingly, it follows that since dualism often leads to attachment for the simple reason that duality implies that there is an essence that separates things into two, including duality and non-duality, Zen negates the first-order negation of "mountains are not mountains and rivers are not rivers" via the affirmation "mountains are mountains, and rivers are rivers." Herein, this negation of the negation is not a return to the essentialist mode of thinking that one viewed the world through when they first set out to practice Zen. Rather, the negation of the negation via the affirmation of "mountains are mountains, and, rivers are rivers" reflects the insight that dualities exist because all things are empty and non-dual. As Victor Sōgen Hori explains, "If one takes non-duality to its logical conclusion, one must negate even the standpoint of non-duality" (Hori 2000, 301). By negating the standpoint of non-duality we are ultimately negating our negation which is captured by "∴ A," or "Therefore mountains are mountains and rivers are rivers."

> When one does this, then the distinctions and differentiations of the ordinary dualistic, conventional standpoint are resurrected. The second appearance of the dualistic conventional standpoint is different from its first appearance. The first appearance of the dualistic conventional standpoint is differentiated from the non-dual ultimate standpoint, whereas the second appearance of dualistic conventional standpoint is identical with the nondual standpoint. […] A corollary of this logic is that nonduality never appears as nonduality; it always appears as duality. For if nonduality appeared as nonduality, it would be dualistically opposed to duality. For similar reasons, emptiness never appears as emptiness; it always appears as form. (Hori 2000, 301)

In his fascicle, *Genjō Kōan*, Dōgen uses this "empty logic" (A is ~A ∴ A) to frame his characterization of the experience of "realizing" the Buddha dharma.

> When all dharmas are [seen as] the Buddha-dharma, then there is delusion and realization, there is practice, there is life and there is death, there are buddhas and there are ordinary beings. When the myriad dharmas are each not of the self, there is no delusion and no realization, no buddhas and no ordinary beings, no life and no death. The Buddha's truth is originally transcendent over abundance and scarcity, and so there is life and death, there is delusion and realization, there are beings and buddhas. And though it is like this, it is only that flowers, while loved, fall; and weeds, while hated, flourish. (Dōgen 1994, 33)

Similar to the logical progression of the verse "mountains are mountains and rivers and rivers," this passage unfolds according to the sequence: (1) affirmation of duality; (2) negation of duality via affirmation of non-duality; and (3) negation of first-order non-duality via affirmation of duality. By negating the negation in (2) via affirmation in (3), Dōgen champions a view of truth that is uniquely Mahāyāna*;* the ultimate nature of things is nothing other than the conventional nature of things themselves. Or as Dōgen metaphorically concludes, the ultimate nature of things is nothing other than flowers withering and falling, and weeds sprouting up amidst our loathing.

Returning to our examination of Dōgen's characterization of values as uncreated (Jpn. *mushō*), it seems clear that from an ultimate perspective of truth, Dōgen is a moral anti-realist (i.e. there are no mind-independent moral truths, principles or facts; conventional statements do not correspond to mind-independent truths). As I noted above, the concept of unborn or uncreated (Jpn. *mushō*) is a popular characterization of the emptiness of all things and ideas. Returning to the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra,* a popular *Yogācāra* text within Zen Buddhism:

> They have no reality, being manifestations of the Mind itself, and Mahamati, as they are not born of being and non-being, they are unborn. Mahamati, all things are like the horns of the hare, horse, donkey, or camel, but the ignorant and simpleminded who are given up to their false and erroneous imaginations, discriminate things where they are not; therefore, all things are unborn. That all things are in their self-nature unborn, Mahamati, belongs to the realm of self-realization attained by noble wisdom, and does not belong essentially to the realm of dualistic discrimination cherished by the ignorant and simple minded. (Suzuki 1932, 57)

Herein, because all discriminated phenomena are empty of an independent/inherent self-essence, such phenomena and causal processes are illusory, dream-like, and so, "unborn" or "uncreated." For Dōgen, this extends to moral ideas, values, principles and beliefs as well. To argue otherwise would be inconsistent for it would entail that while metaphysical and epistemological things and ideas are empty,

values and normative beliefs are not. The philosophy of emptiness denies that our conventional values, principles and normative beliefs are essentially real. In keeping with this philosophy, Dōgen is an anti-realist; the tripartite moral division of good, bad and indifference is dependent upon a myriad of conditions which are essentially uncreated and not real (i.e. anti-realism). As Kim explains:

> The moral values of good, evil, and neutral did not exist in themselves or for themselves with any independent metaphysical status, because they were nothing more than the temporary configurations resulting from infinitely complex interactions of conditions. In brief, good and evil did not have the self-same metaphysical ground or source; they were without self-nature (*mujishō*) and were unattainable (*fukatoku*), to use customary Buddhist phraseology. (Kim 2004, 224-225)

Thus when Dōgen states that the nature of good, evil and the undefined are 'uncreated' he is, I contend, committing himself to the metaethical view that values are not objective, nor essentially real.

§4.3 Zen Anti-realism

By characterizing Dōgen as an anti-realist, I am not claiming that he saw himself as such, nor that he was attempting to defend anti-realism from the popular challenges advanced by proponents of realism. Dōgen was a Buddhist, and his conception of ethics was directly informed by the *Mahāyāna* teachings of emptiness and the two truths. Moreover, his writings on the moral life are not intended for an academic audience, but rather for Zen monks and lay practitioners. Herein, I am in agreement with Edelglass that we should approach the normative beliefs of Buddhist traditions, including Dōgen's Zen, on their own terms. That being said, I don't find it problematic to characterize his metaethical outlook as anti-realist for the following reason. In short, just because S does not identify with some particular standpoint X does not mean that X does not appropriately characterize the views in which S champions. For example, Hippocrates did not make use of the term paternalism to describe his outlook on physician-patient relationships. However, the fact that he did not identify with this concept does not mean that Hippocrates was not paternalistic when it came to treating patients. As evidenced in the classical version of the Hippocratic Oath, there is no mention of a physician's duty to fully inform patients of their medical condition, nor an obligation to tell them the truth. The traditional Hippocratic Oath, notwithstanding beneficence and respect for a patient's privacy, provides a platform of health-care values wherein

"doctors know best," which is paternalistic. In regards to Dōgen, while he does not defend anti-realism per se, his metaethical outlook is nonetheless anti-realist as evidenced by his use of the term *mushō* to characterize the nature of good, bad, and indifference.

This anti-realist interpretation of Dōgen's metaethics is supported by other passages within *Shoaku-Makusa*. For example, he expounds further on the universal precept "to practice the many kinds of right" when he writes: "These many kinds of right are classed within the three properties as "rightness." Even though the many kinds of right are included in "rightness," there has never been any kind of right that is realized beforehand and that then waits for someone to do it" (Dōgen 1994, 103). As Gudo Nishijima explains, the three properties of right include the tripartite division of good, bad and indifference, whose metaethical nature is *mushō*. Right actions are, in other words, from an ultimate perspective, *mushō*; rightness does not exist as a mind-independent property/truth. As I interpret Dōgen, we ought not deliberate upon the rightness or wrongness of actions before actions themselves have been committed; rightness and wrongness is always relative to the situation – karmic situation – at hand; herein, I am sympathetic with Bret Davis' 'contextualist' interpretation of Dōgen noted in Chapter two. Accordingly, if we are preoccupied with thinking about the nature of right action, we will not be able to effectively respond to circumstances that present themselves before us in ways that are often unpredicted. For example, one might claim that the right thing for all residents of Florida to do during a pandemic is to shelter in place and socially isolate; however, that normative claim might change, say, if at the same time a category five hurricane is threatening to cause massive destruction to residential communities; and, even then, our normative judgment would be based upon additional conditions, such as the architectural integrity of coastal homes. In other words, there are no normative judgments nor prescriptions that are unconditional. If one thinks that there are, then, it is likely that such an individual will likely miss a number of morally significant conditions that do arise in all-too-dynamic ways when we have to make a moral decision or formulate a normative judgment. Thus, it is clear that anti-realism as *mushō* vis-à-vis good, bad and indifference is woven into his stance on "right action." Since 'rightness', too, is empty,

one ought not affirm views that assume that what makes actions right or wrong exists independently of the minds who perform and are affected by such actions, or the environmental/situational conditions at hand.

Now, notwithstanding his moral anti-realism, Dōgen does not believe we are existentially paralyzed in our ability to formulate value judgments, nor impotent in our ability to act morally. Continuing from the aforementioned passage, Dōgen writes, "The myriad kinds of right have no set shape, but they converge on the place of doing right faster than iron to a magnet, and with the force stronger than the *vairambhaka* winds" (Dōgen 1994, 103). For Dōgen, while there is no objective/universal nature of rightness that exists, when actions unfold we are still able to formulate value judgments in light of the conventional views that hold our web of worldly beliefs together. That being said, Dōgen is clear that these conventional views are indeed relative, and so, not mind-independent: "It is utterly impossible for the Earth, mountains and rivers, the world, a national land, or even the force of accumulated karma, to hinder this coming together of right. At the same time, the principle that recognitions differ from world to world, in regards to right, is the same [as in regards to wrong] (Dōgen 1994, 103-104). As Nishijima insightfully notes, the usual metaphor for Dōgen's anti-realism is water, which finds its philosophical footing in *Yogācāra* thought. In his *Sansui-kyō*, "Mountains and Water Sūtra," water, as we conventionally understand this element, is seen as a palace from the perspective of fish, as a string of pearls from the perspective of gods, and as blood or pus from the perspective of demons.[110] The conventional truth about water is relative to the worldly perspective we embody; no "truth" is mind-independent. Similar to water, good and bad, right and wrong are conventionally relative, and ultimately empty and uncreated (Jpn. *mushō*).

> The essence of rightness, the essence of indifference, and so on are also uncreated, are the state without excess, and are real form. At the same time, at each concrete place these three properties include innumerable kinds of dharmas. In wrongs, there are similarities and differences between wrong in this world and wrong in other worlds. There are similarities and differences between former times and later times. There are similarities and differences between wrong in heavens

[110] Herein, Dōgen seems to be referencing Vasubandhu's *Vimśatikā*, "The Proof that There Only Impressions."

> above and wrong in the human world. How much greater is the difference between moral wrong, moral right, and moral indifference in Buddhism and in the secular world." (Dōgen 2011, 158)

No doubt, characterizing Dōgen's Zen ethic as moral anti-realism raises a number of questions and issues that deserve our attention, including: (1) what version of moral anti-realism best captures Dōgen's metaethical perspective; and (2) if Dōgen is ultimately a moral anti-realist, can we really take seriously what he claims to be conventionally true about the moral life? Or, as Finnigan states in reference to *Madhyamaka*, can Dōgen provide justification for conventional normative beliefs, including the role of women in monasteries or the mindfulness and care one should embody when cooking food? Can Dōgen's anti-realism provide coherent reasons for recognizing certain normative constraints, albeit conventional?

Proceeding with (1), it is understood that as a metaethical outlook, anti-realism is variegated. As we noted in the first chapter, there are a plurality of perspectives including error-theory (extreme nihilism) and emotivism, prescriptivism, and expressivism (moderate nihilism). However, rather than pigeonholing Dōgen into a specific camp, I am content, at this point of our inquiry, in limiting our characterization of his metaethics to the broad stroke of anti-realism. This general commitment, as Mark Siderits explains in reference to *Madhyamaka* thought, ultimately holds that there are no mind-independent values or moral principles. In other words, contrary to moral realism which maintains that mind-independent values and moral truths exist, moral anti-realism contends that all values and moral beliefs are relative to the conceptual schemes of individuals or communities. Dogen's conceptual scheme is framed within the context of Zen practice, realizing Buddha-nature and embodying the virtues and normative vows of a *bodhisattva*. Just as we saw in Chapter one when examining Nietzsche's metaethics, this way-seeking philosophy is not in keeping with the truth-seeking values of Anglo-American metaethical circles, specifically logical positivism. Moreover, it is not obvious based upon Dōgen's writings that he would agree with the non-cognitive assumption that affects, sentiment/feelings/emotion are essentially distinct from reason. Dōgen is clear throughout his writings that dualities such as practice and enlightenment, mind and the body, sentient and insentient beings only exist because all things are empty and non-dual.

Accordingly, Dōgen would likely agree with Nietzsche that the opposition between affect and reason is conditioned by our language, which does not accurately capture and depict the nature of reality. A philosophy of emotion as put forward by Robert Solomon, which we treated in Chapter one, is a perspective that Dōgen would likely champion as it does not conflict with the Zen philosophy of, the 'oneness of mind and body' (Jpn. *shinjin ichinyō*) which we will say more about in Chapter six when we explore his practice of *zazen*. Recall, Solomon proffers a nuanced perspective on the nature of emotion whereby, "emotions are neither discrete entities nor distinct types but complex multijudgment processes that engage any number of different ingredients along different dimensions" (Solomon 2007, 212-213). While Dōgen does not provide an explicit examination of affects per se, he does offer his reader, in a very Nietzschean way, much to ruminate upon in regards to power. According to Nishijima's introduction to the fascicle *Kannon*, "*Avalokiteśvara*," Dōgen believed that the *bodhisattva* of compassion is, "a symbol of a life force that is more fundamental to living beings than compassion" (Nishijima 1994, 211). This life force, which Dōgen characterizes as "mystical power" (Jpn. *jinzu*), "is born from and with that which is beyond consciousness, and it relies on as its real refuge that which is beyond consciousness" (Dōgen 1994, 77). I will also say more about this mystical power in Chapter six when we explore Dōgen's phenomenology of non-thinking. For right now it is important to note that according to Dōgen, mystical power, which is a normative force, vis-à-vis a *bodhisattva's* vows and embodiment of compassion, is different from the dualistic views that non-cognitivists defend, vis-à-vis "sharp distinctions between beliefs and attitudes, reasons and emotions, facts and values" (Solomon 2007, 206). After all, the *bodhisattva's* realization of great compassion as understood by Mahāyāna Buddhism, Dōgen included, is inextricably tied to wisdom via insight into emptiness, and vice versa; clearly this non-dualistic metaethic, which is quite similar to Nietzsche's perspectivism and will to power, is not shared by non-cognitivists, nor error-theorists/fictionalists.

Turning to the second question: if Dōgen is ultimately anti-realist, can we really take seriously what he claims to be conventionally true about the moral life? Herein we find ourselves in the middle of a much broader debate amongst scholars of Buddhist ethics. For example, in light of his characterization

of moral values as *mushō*, one might ask whether a moral anti-realist such as Dōgen can consistently proffer conventional normative judgments that have action guiding constraints as he does in various fascicles within the *Shōbōgenzō*? Can Dōgen, or any Buddhist who is a moral anti-realist, marshal reasons together that are coherent and that we can take seriously while at the same time not believing that such reasons are ultimately real and/or true? If Dōgen does not ultimately believe in any mind-independent moral values or principles, how can we take seriously his conventional normative beliefs? Charles Goodman raises this point in his article, "From *Madhyamaka* to Consequentialism: A Road Map.*"*

> One way to put the problem starts with noticing that, in Buddhism, there are only two kinds of truth: Ultimate and conventional. And it is clear that, according to Madhyamaka, ethical statements cannot possibly be ultimately true. So they must be merely conventional. What, then, does it mean to say that ethics is merely conventional? It sounds like we would be saying that ethics is a social construct within each particular society, with no basis at all outside of contingent practices and customs of that society. Such a claim leaves us a variety of extremely unattractive metaethical options, including moral relativism, ethnocentric conservatism, and error theory. And none of these options fits well at all with any universal ethical theory that aspires to provide normative guidance, however general and abstract, across places and times. (Goodman 2016, 141-142)

To begin formulating a response to this problem, I think it is important to first note that it is likely that Dōgen, similar to Nietzsche's perspectivism, would be suspicious of the dualistic distinction between normative and non-normative beliefs and perspectives. After all, the distinction itself entails a value judgment between what is considered normative and non-normative. Moreover, in light of his reflections on mystical power, vis-à-vis embodying the *bodhisattva's* vows, it is likely that Dōgen would interpret all beliefs, perspectives and livelihoods as normative, through and through. Thus, what this means is that our ability and willingness, from an anti-realist perspective, to take conventional normative beliefs seriously is no different from taking any belief seriously; we take beliefs seriously because they have the capacity and 'power' to influence and change our lives, for better or for worse, depending upon our perspective.

Secondly, as Bronwyn Finnigan[111] notes in "The Nature of the Buddhist Path" (2017), the practice of the moral life is not to achieve some goal outside of the practice of Zen itself. In other words, the justificatory grounds for Dōgen's beliefs will not be separate from the monastic praxis and rituals of Zen monks, specifically *zazen* as we will see in Chapter six.[112] As I noted in Chapter three, Dōgen's metaethic, vis-à-vis means/ends or practice/attainment, is grounded in his nondual interpretation of the *Tathāgatagharba* philosophy that all beings are originally enlightened (Jpn. *hongaku*); for Dōgen, Buddha-nature is only realized via practice itself, rather than a consequence of such. For example, consider the following passage from Dōgen's *Genjō Kōan,* wherein he presents the parable of the wind and the fan:

> Zen Master Hotetsu of Mayoku-zan mountain is using a fan. A monk comes by and asks, "The nature of the air is to be ever-present, and there is no place that air cannot reach. Why then does the Master use a fan?"
>
> The Master says, "You have only understood that the nature of air is to be ever-present, but you do not yet know the truth that there is no place air cannot reach."
>
> The Monk says, "What is the truth of there being no place air cannot reach?"
>
> At this, the Master just carries on using the fan. The monk does prostrations. The experience of the Buddha-dharma, the vigorous road of the authentic transmission, is like this. Someone who says that because the air is ever-present we need not use a fan, or that even when we do not use a fan we can still feel the air, does not know ever-presence, and does not know the nature of air. Because the nature of air is to be ever-present, the behavior of Buddhists has made the Earth manifest itself as gold and has ripened the Long River into curds and whey. (Dōgen 1994, 36-37)

The ever-present air is nothing other than Buddha-nature, and using the fan is Zen practice, mainly *zazen*. For Dōgen, the realization of Buddha-nature is clearly constitutive with practice rather than a consequentialist goal which meditation serves as instrumental means. As Kim explains, "Buddha-nature was not to be enfolded in, but was to unfold through, human activities and expressions" (Kim 2004, 37)

[111] See Bronwyn Finnigan, "The Nature of the Buddhist Path," from A Mirror is for Reflection: Understanding Buddhist ethics. (2017)

[112] Herein, Guilbault's 'conventionalist' characterization of Dōgen's strategy for justifying conventional normative judgments is helpful.

Dōgen's writings on the moral life, and his normative judgments on Zen practice and monasticism, were drafted for his students. Rather than attempting to establish a set of values and normative beliefs for all of the world to follow, he was simply presenting them to monks and lay practitioners who have taken the Buddhist precepts, and are committed to being a *bodhisattva* who "vows to save all sentient beings while realizing that there are no sentient beings to be saved.

> Here, Subhuti, someone who has set out in the Bodhisattva-vehicle should produce a thought in this manner: "all beings I must lead to Nirvana, into the Realm of Nirvana which leaves nothing behind; and yet, after beings have thus been led to Nirvana, no being at all has been led to Nirvana." And why? If in a Bodhisattva the notion of a "being" should take place, he could not be called a "Bodhi-being." (Conze 1958, 56-57)

Accordingly, following Guilbault's 'conventionalist' characterization, I contend that we can take Dōgen's normative judgments seriously as I believe he was not only sincere in his efforts to promote such through his writings, including his *Eihei Shingi*, "Pure Standards for *Eihei-ji*," specifically his "Instructions to the cook, *Tenzokōkun*, but he is also consistent and coherent in translating his metaethical reflections, vis-à-vis *mushō*, into monastic instructions and action guiding directives: "As for the attitude while preparing food, the essential point is deeply to arouse genuine mind and respectful mind without making judgments about the ingredients' fineness or coarseness. […] Cooking so called rich, creamy food is not necessarily superior, cooking plain vegetable soup is not necessarily inferior" (Dōgen 1996, 44). Indeed, Dōgen took the role and responsibility of the *tenzo* quite seriously while maintaining that all values are *mushō*, and that one should not be blinded by dualistic value judgments.

> One should not see the assembled monks as good or bad, or consider them as elder or younger. Even the self does not know where the self will settle down; how could others determine where others will settle down? How could it not be a mistake to find others' faults with our own faults? Although there is a difference between the senior and junior and the wise and stupid, as members of a sangha they are the same. Moreover, the wrong in the past may be right in the present, so who could distinguish the sage from the common person? […] If you have the spirit of not arranging everything into right and wrong, how could you not carry out conduct of the Way that directly proceeds to unsurpassed bodhi? (Dōgen 1996, 4)

Whether one's normative judgment pertains to preparing food or ageism, I contend that the degree of seriousness by which normative beliefs are accepted or rejected is dependent upon how such judgments influence one's passions and affects. Herein, and in agreement with Solomon, I believe the non-

cognitivists are spot on in that our emotions do play a significant role in how we internalize, wrestle with and embody normative beliefs; emotions give our beliefs and judgments "their depth and their meaning," and this is where non-cognitivism is partially right (Solomon 2007, 204). When one is sincere about the normative positions they affirm or oppose, one thereby becomes existentially invested in such; the loss of natural bio-diversity is a case in point. To take environmental issues seriously conditions how we identify with ourselves and relate with others, and vice versa. Accordingly, I contend it is absurd to imagine someone taking an environmental issue seriously, say the intersection between pollution and environmental racism, while at the same time being apathetic and insincere about pollution and environmental racism. Feelings/attitudes/impulses are, in other words, salient for taking any moral matter seriously, and so it is not obvious that moral facts, properties or truths are necessary in order to embody such seriousness. Based upon Dōgen's Zen perspective, wherein conventional dualistic distinctions are understood to be ultimately non-dual, there is good reason to believe that Dōgen felt that what he was writing about actually mattered, and should matter to those who choose to follow his practice of Zen Buddhism.

§4.4 Justifying Our Uncreated Moral Beliefs

While Dōgen's commitment to anti-realism does not undermine one's ability to take moral matters seriously, we still face the following question: Can Dōgen's antirealism justify conventional moral beliefs, including his monastic instructions? As we saw in Chapter one, this metaethical question lays bare the main divisions between realism/cognitivism, relativism and nihilism (both extreme and moderate). Then, at the end of Chapter two, we saw that this question is at the heart of a contemporary debate among the Cowherds. Finnigan, in particular, contends that any commitment to anti-realism, vis-à-vis *śūnyatā*, dissolves our ability to justify our conventional moral beliefs. Since Dōgen is committed to anti-realism, vis-à-vis emptiness, according to Finnigan's reasoning it follows that Dōgen would also be unable to provide justification for the conventional beliefs he takes seriously and is sincere about. For the same reasons she lays out against *Madhyamaka*, it would seem that Dōgen's anti-realism would: (1)

be incongruent with the conventional view that normative judgments have the appearance of describing the world we live within; and (2) slip into relativism, which is incongruent with the belief in the uniformity of "Perfection-of-Wisdom" attitudes. Guerreo echoes similar points in regards to fictionalism as well, though she is not opposed, as we saw, to finding an alternative metaethical strategy.

Is Dōgen's Zen-ethic impotent in its ability to justify conventional normative claims and value judgments? Before we answer this question, it is important to note that Dōgen does not set out to theoretically justify his Zen ethic. He does not, in other words proffer a set of arguments that justifies his conventional normative views. Instead, justification for normative beliefs are constitutive of the very practice of Zen, specifically *zazen*. For similar reasons we would not expect, say, an expert skier to provide reasons for valuing the practice of skiing and "skier's etiquette" independent from the embodied practice of skiing itself, the justification for Dōgen's Zen ethic is nothing other than Zen practice. As we shall see in Chapter six, while monastic precepts, chanting sutras and ritual etiquette help cultivate certain conventional beliefs via ceremony, according to Dōgen, the practice of *zazen*, and the phenomenology of non-thinking (Jpn. *hishiryō*) is the soil from which all conventional beliefs grow and are cultivated from. For Dōgen, 'justification' is realized via practice (i.e. orthopraxy), and, as Guilbault maintains, the conventions of Buddhist traditions.

When it comes to justifying conventional moral beliefs, I don't think that the two aforementioned challenges against moral anti-realism in general, Dōgen's moral anti-realism in particular, are insurmountable. In regards to the lack of congruency between anti-realism's claim that there are no moral facts and the conventional view that normative judgments have the appearance of describing the world we live within, it is not entirely clear why such derails any and all anti-realist attempts to justify normative claims. There are a number of conventional beliefs that were once maintained – beliefs whose justification were based upon the way things appear – yet we no longer continue to hold, such as the sun revolving around the earth. And, despite the lack of congruency between our current insights and the way we conventionally speak about the sun (e.g., "the sun rises in the East and sets in the West.") we feel

justified in our conventional explanations as to why the Ptolemaic universe is an inaccurate account of the cosmos. In other words, conventional views are not permanent, but rather, change over time; yet nevertheless, despite the changes in our conventional beliefs, we often continue to conventionally speak as if no change has occurred. Just as we continue to make plans with a friend or a family member to 'watch the sunrise,' from the perspective of anti-realism we can continue to make moral statements that appear as though they are describing the world while recognizing there are no mind-independent values.[113] Accordingly, conventional normative statements, including "*tsujigiri*[114] is wrong," can be justified in reference to mind-dependent values, specifically our attitudinal feelings and emotions, vis-à-vis matters one takes seriously.

On the other hand, the claim that anti-realism will lead to relativism, which is incongruent with the uniformity of "Perfection-of-Wisdom" attitudes, I don't think is a problem that would concern Dōgen. Since his Zen ethic is relative to the Buddhist tradition as whole, and Zen Buddhist monasticism in particular, relativism per se would not strike Dōgen as a concern, *prima facie*. When we look to the stories and hagiographies of Zen masters and patriarchs, while it is recognized that there is some general uniformity, vis-à-vis realization of emptiness and enlightenment, a disparity does in fact remain between the ways in which they comport their 'Perfection-of-Wisdom' attitudes in the everyday conventional world. For example, some masters have lived in reclusion in the mountains and others lived in urban centers. Some masters have used fierce pedagogical methods and techniques when instructing students, while others were less strict and severe. Some masters have engaged in antinomian behavior, while others have comported themselves more conservatively. In other words, in Zen, and in keeping with the East Asian philosophy of coincidence of opposites, while there is a general uniformity of Perfection-of-

[113] At this point one might query whether or not this line of reasoning amounts to fictionalism. Later in this dissertation I will be showing why fictionalism does not fully capture Dōgen's metaethics. At this point we shall note that my example of "watching the sunrise," does not entail fictionalism since the speech act actually refers to an event that is not phenomenologically fictitious.

[114] *Tsujigiri* literally means "cross roads cut." In Medieval Japan, when a samurai warrior received a new sword from a swordsmith, the samurai would test out its effectiveness by attacking an innocent person, often traveling a foot path or road at night.

Wisdom attitudes, there is also a general relativity of conventional normative commitments. Thus based upon these reasons, I contend that Guilbault's 'conventionalism' and Davis' 'contextualism' are helpful for justifying normative judgments. However, as a metaethical counterpart to anti-realism, both interpretations only clarify what normative expressions 'say'; they do not, in other words, reveal the meaning of normative expressions and judgments. As noted in Chapter two, I contend that anti-cognitivism is a fruitful metaethical counterpart to antirealism for specifying what normative expressions and judgments mean; mainly, normative expressions do not describe normative facts (cognitivism), nor are they reducible to feelings and emotions (non-cognitivism), but instead they reveal and conceal perspectives.

§4.5 Closing Remarks

In this chapter we treated some of Dōgen's metaethical writings as presented in the fascicle *Shoaku-Makusa*, as well as *Eihei Shingi*. We examined his axiological characterization of good, bad and indifference as 'uncreated' (Jpn. *mushō*), as well as his relativist characterization of right action. We concluded that his metaethical reflections herein are best understood from the metaethical perspective of anti-realism, yet distinct from the anti-realist theories of error theory and non-cognitivism for the simple reason that Dōgen's approach to doing philosophy is that of way-seeking, while that of error theory, fictionalism and non-cognitivism are motivated by truth seeking values. In addition, we also noted that it was likely that Dōgen would resist the dualistic distinction between normative and non-normative judgments, as well as dualistic distinction between reason and affects/emotions/passions. Accordingly, our inquiry in this chapter has begun to show that the justification for conventional normative judgments is, according to Dōgen, grounded in practice, such as monasticism and the vows of the *bodhisattva*, rather than theory. In the next chapter we shall attempt to flesh out important features of Dōgen's moral language, both from ultimate and conventional standpoints of truth. This will in turn provide additional reasons, as we shall see, for resisting error theory, fictionalism and non-cognitivism as appropriate interpretative models for making sense of Dōgen's standpoint regarding the nature of normative

propositions, specifically in regards to the Buddhist philosophy of karma. By unpacking these features in light of more general features of the *kōan* curriculum and Zen philosophy of language, vis-à-vis conventional and ultimate standpoints, we shall be able to deepen our appreciation of Dōgen's anti-realism. Such an appreciation will thereby afford us the ability to discern the syntax of his many moral expressions throughout the *Shōbōgenzō*, which in turn will support my interpretation of Dōgen's anti-realist metaethic as 'anti-cognitivism', mainly normative propositions do not describe moral facts or express normative properties, but rather reveal a perspective.

Chapter Five

Anti-Cognitivism: Dōgen's Language of Morals

§ 5.1 *Chapter Overview*

In the previous chapter we examined Dōgen's characterization of moral values as 'uncreated' (Jpn. *mushō*). Therein we saw that his non-essentialist characterization of good, bad and indifference, as well as the duality between right and wrong action, is best understood from the perspective of moral anti-realism. According to this perspective (i.e. "true dharma eye"), because all things are empty, there are no mind-independent values or moral principles that are objectively true. My objective in this chapter is to flesh out this metaethical perspective further by examining the language of morals and nature of normative claims according to Dōgen's Zen perspective. To do such, we shall frame our analysis of Zen language in light of scholarly works of Dale S. Wright, Victor Sōgen Hori Steven Heine and Rupert Read. From their insights we shall be able to clarify how Dōgen speaks about normative matters from both conventional and ultimate standpoints of truth, particularly in regards to normative matters, karma included. Herein, our treatment will receive further assistance from Steven DeCaroli and Sūdō Brian Schroeder. Finally, we shall review some additional features of Dōgen's "practice of words and letters" as enumerated by Hee-Jin Kim, which will in turn set the stage for the subsequent chapter on *zazen*. Based upon these inquiries, this chapter will show how Dōgen's standpoint regarding the limitations and possibilities of our ability to use language, vis-à-vis what words mean and what they say, provides a nuanced perspective of the concept of ineffability in general, normative propositions in particular.

For Dōgen, while it happens to be the case that we can conventionally describe moral situations or behavior as good or bad, such descriptions do not reflect the existence of ultimate/objective values or cognitive normative truths. However, that being said, the limitations of language do not, as we shall see, restrict Dōgen's ability from engaging in normative discourse either through the use of conventional moral descriptions, or, through performative expressions of one's attitudinal preferences; rather, such limitations are themselves capabilities and possibilities, vis-à-vis performative expression. Thus, based

upon this analysis, I plan to characterize Dōgen's metaethics, for similar reasons noted in our examination of Nietzsche in Chapter one, as anti-cognitivist. What this means is that, according to Dōgen, moral propositions do not report or describe moral facts, nor do they express moral truths; and, counter to the outlook of non-cognitivism, they are not reducible to our feelings and emotions. What conventional normative propositions do, rather, is reveal and/or conceal perspectives.

§5.2 Fingers Pointing at the Moon: The Limits of Language

Zen Buddhism is popularly characterized by the capping phrase (Jpn. *jakugo),* "a separate transmission outside doctrine, not founded on words and letters" (Jpn. *Kyōge betsuden furu moji*) (ZS 8.97). From a conventional standpoint, while we can speak about objects, proffer explanations, or express sentiments and beliefs, Zen rhetorically maintains that these speech acts are nothing more than, as stated in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, 'fingers pointing at the moon'; "As the ignorant grasp the finger-tip and not the moon […] so those who cling to the letter, know not my truth" (Suzuki 1932, 193). Words and letters can, no doubt, direct our attention to the things and matters we care about and value, and thereby serve a pragmatic role in our everyday lives. However, these linguistic tools do not reveal the 'nature' and/or truth about things themselves. As I noted in Chapter three, the languages we speak and communicate through do not provide a 'full picture' of what things are really like; while one side is revealed, the other side remains concealed. For example, in regards to the qualities of fermented cabbage, words that describe flavor can inform someone what to expect if they choose to try it; however, verbal descriptions, such as 'piquant,' are not sufficient for a complete understanding of what fermented cabbage tastes like. Thus, regardless of whether the topic of conversation is kōan or cabbage, some aspect of our experience remains concealed and ineffable.

This idea of ineffability is deeply embedded within the Zen literary tradition. For example, consider this small sample of capping phrases[115] that "ridicule the idea that one can comprehend Zen by

[115] A capping phrase is, "A short commentary appended to a phrase from either the main case or the verse in a Zen text" (Hori 2003, 30). As literary component of zen training, capping phrases serve several functions, including

means of written explanations" (Hori, 2003, 3): "His mouth is like a stone pedestal" (Jpn. *Kuchi sōban ni nitari*) (ZS 4.155); "The mouth is the gate of misfortune" (Jpn. *Kuchi wa kore kamon*) (ZS 4.156); "The mute eats a bitter melon" (Jpn. *Asu kuka o kissu*) (ZS. 5.3); "Like a mute who has had a dream" (Jpn. *Asu no yume o uru ga gotoshi*) (ZS 5.4); "Speaking without speaking, knowing without knowing" (*Setsu fusetsu, chi fuchi*) (ZS 6.148); "Speaking is not a matter of using your tongue" (*Kuchi o hiraku koto wa zettōjō ni arazu*) (ZS 7.112); "Open your mouth and at once your wrong, move your tongue and at once you transgress" (*Kuchi o hirakeba sunawachi ayamari, shita o ugokaseba sunawachi somuku*) (ZS 8.111); "Words cannot touch it, thought cannot reach it" (*Gonsen fukyū iro futū*) (ZS 8.176); "Blah, blah, blah, blah, yes and no" (*Wa-wa-ba-ba- uku muku*) (ZS 8.441). In addition to ineffability, the philosophical message embedded within these verses is that language taints our understanding of the world; 'words and letters' have the tendency to undermine what is already perfect by hypostatizing and reifying things that are, ultimately, empty of a fixed essence or nature; hence the capping phrase "He cuts a wound into healthy flesh" (Jpn. *Kōniku o egutte kasa to nasu*) (ZS 5.96). As a result, we have the tendency to become "All tied up in words" (Jpn. *Kuri ni bakusatsu seraru*) (ZS 4.153); we become entangled and attached to the words, letters and concepts that we believe to reflect the world as it is. Ultimately, the world, as it is, cannot be spoken about; it is ineffable.

Notwithstanding the ubiquity of 'ineffable Zen' in *kōan* literary games and poems, Dōgen had a nuanced perspective of ineffability, which is evidenced in his critical interpretation of the aforementioned capping phrase, "A separate transmission outside doctrine, not founded on words and letters" (Jpn. *Kyōge betsuden furu moji*) (ZS 8.97); for example, in his fascicle *Bukkyō*, "The Buddha's Teachings," Dōgen cautions us not to take a literal interpretation of this popular characterization of Zen, which he believes to be logically fallacious.

> Although they have transmitted and received the fallacy of "a separate transmission outside of the teachings," because they have never known the inside and outside, the logic of their words is not

providing the Zen master with a means to confirm a particular monk's insight, while at the same time providing each monk the opportunity to acquire a deeper insight into what they have already discovered to be insightful.

> consistent…If we speak of authentic transmission of the one mind which is the supreme vehicle, it should be like this. But the fellows who speak of "a separate transmission outside the teachings" have never known this meaning. Therefore, do not, through belief in the fallacy of "a separate transmission outside the teachings," misunderstand the Buddha's teaching. (Dōgen 1994, 57-58)

Why is this characterization of Zen fallacious? As I interpret Dōgen, the logic is simple: not only is the 'separate transmission' characterization based upon words and letters itself, but also, one cannot even begin to make sense of a 'separate transmission' that is separate from words and letters unless one has an understanding of the teachings themselves. I contend that Dōgen understands the 'separate transmission fallacy' to be a version of a 'fallacy of division.' The fallacy of division is committed when we think that what is true of the whole must be true of each part[116]. In the context of Zen, this fallacy is committed when we reason that since Zen cannot be conveyed in words and letters, none of the Buddhist teachings can. Or, since reason and language cannot disseminate the nature of things themselves, it thus follows that reason and language, vis-à-vis the Buddha's teachings, are useless and vain. To adopt this fallacious perspective is to adopt an anti-intellectualist view of Zen that is quietist and dualistic. Dōgen forcefully argues this point in the fascicle *Sansui-kyō,* "Mountains and Waters Sutra," when he writes:

> Their idea is as follows: A story which involves images and thoughts is not a Zen story of the Buddhist Patriarchs […] What the shavelings call "stories beyond rational understanding" are beyond rational understanding only for them; the Buddhist Patriarchs are not like that […] If ultimately there is no rational understanding, the reasoning which those shavelings have now set forth cannot hit the target […] They do not know that images and thoughts are words and phrases, and they do not know that words and phrases transcend images and thoughts […] Their present negation of rational understanding is nothing but a false notion. (Dōgen 1994, 171-172)

As Dōgen notes, to think that Zen experience is completely divorced from language and rational understanding is itself a rationally constructed view which creates a duality between effable and ineffable experiences and realities.[117] However, as Dōgen explained, ordinary perceptions of images and thoughts

[116] For example, it would be a fallacy of division to assume that each room within a monastery is big simply because the monastic building itself is big.

[117] According to Steven Heine, Dōgen's critical thinking vis-à-vis kōan and ineffablilty is directed towards Rinzai Zen commentaries and interpretations. "The main rhetorical difference from previous Chinese kōan collection commentaries involves conflicting views of the function of interpretation. In 'Mountains and Rivers Proclaiming the Sūtras,' Dōgen is quite critical of conventional Zen standpoints that in Japan became associated with the Rinzai

are laden with rational discriminations and linguistic thought-coverings. On the level of phenomenology, to think that there is some other mode of experience that completely stands outside of the dualistic modes of receiving and processing sensory images, crafting thoughts and asserting expressions via words and letters creates an even greater dualistic chasm, so much so that perhaps one might be less dualistic if they did not seek out a state of nonduality.

Dale S. Wright provides an extensive analysis of this philosophy of language in his *Philosophical Meditations on Zen Buddhism* (1998). According to Wright, due to modern conceptions of language which locate such in "the derivative and subsequent roles of description and expression," the popular interpretation of the role of language in Zen is "instrumentalist" (Wright; 1998, 71). This instrumentalist interpretation, which is championed by John Blofeld[118] and Henry Rosemont Jr[119], argues that "language is an instrument or tool available for our use in achieving certain specific communicative goals. Language is a means to some other end" (Wright; 1998, 65).

> Why didn't the Buddha just remain silent after enlightenment? Why speak at all? The traditional Buddhist answer matches Blofeld's: the Buddha spoke out of compassion, and skillful means. The suffering needed assistance, and the *dharma* was the tool most suited to overcoming their pain […] Linguistic formulation of the dharma has a purpose in spite of the fact that the best Zen intuitions are inclined toward silence. (Wright 1998, 65)

Wright challenges this instrumentalist interpretation of language. He contends that language is "embedded in the content of our experience" (Wright; 1998, 71). Language is not an epiphenomenon of our experience of the world; rather, it is imminent to experience, including non-theoretical perception of the external world.

> Language is present even in the "direct" perception of an object. Language and perception "co-arise." Although theoretically separable, they are indistinguishable in experience itself […] Awareness of what we perceive is linguistically structured, and comes to us directly in the perception itself […] It is true that we do perceive some things incorrectly, and that subsequently we alter the language through which that perception is understood. What we initially perceive as

sect, whereby masters would routinely shout and slap or strike disciples with a staff as a way of shocking and prodding them to go beyond rational understanding by abandoning the use of intellect" (Heine 2020, 153).
[118] See John Blofeld. *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po: On Transmission of Mind*. New York, Grove Press, 1958.
[119] See Henry Rosemont. "The Meaning is the Use: Kōan and Mondō as Linguistic Tools of Zen Masters." Philosophy East and West, no. 20 (1970): 109-119.

> a meditation bell is later understood to have been an ice-cream vendor. But both "perceptions," both "correct" and "incorrect," come to us in the form of language. Language doesn't guarantee accuracy; it just guarantees that all of our perceptions will be understood within the given context of language. […] Language, therefore, is not to be located only at the level of concept and predication. It is also present at the level of perception in such a way that perception, language, and thinking are all interdependent. (Wright 1998, 71-72)

Based upon this 'embedded' model of language, which no doubt echoes Nietzsche's perspective as we noted in Chapter one, it would be a mistake to think that Zen's literary references to silence are attempts to abandon linguistic experience for some non-linguistic mode-of-being. For example, in *kōan* case 6, "Sakyamuni Holds up a Flower," from the *Mumonkan*, "The Gateless Gate", when the Buddha held up a flower without uttering a word to the assembly, though it is clear that he was not engaging in a theoretical discourse, the Buddha was nevertheless participating in a language game that is uniquely Zen. As Wright explains, "The language of Zen is a condition without which neither the practice of Zen nor the point of Zen would exist" (Wright 1998, 73).

Wright's non-instrumentalist interpretation of language in Zen is defended by Victor Sōgen Hori as well. In his article "Kōan and Kenshō in the Rinzai Zen Curriculum*"* from *The Kōan: Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism* (2000), Hori argues that despite the rhetoric of ineffablity, language can, within the context of Zen practice, enable one to express the inexpressible. In other words, rather than falling into the dualistic trap of thinking that one should simply remain silent on all matters related to Zen – nonduality and emptiness – Zen has created a literary tradition whereby words and letters give linguistic embodiment to ineffable experiences. Herein, Hori's interpretation of language in Zen can be extended to Dōgen; as Steven Heine explains:

> Dōgen provides a philosophy that stresses the necessity and efficacy of employing language at every single stage of the transmission process without ever dismissing its utility. In contrast to Numerous Zen thinkers for whom language tends to conceal […] for Dōgen literary discourse operates as a window that divulges reality by providing an opportunity to convey authentically any circumstance, while recognizing that delusion invariably pervades any expression of realization. […] Even if all expressions are considered partial and misleading, in seeking realization language provides an unlimited resource for revealing the Dharma. Existential awareness is articulated through each and every form of discourse, because truth is revealed in routine words when they are plumbed for hidden depths and meaning. (Heine 2020, 151)

Thus, to think of Zen practice and experience as a mode of being that transcends words and letters is to think dualistically. After all, silence is often a form of non-verbal speech; a teacher who pauses in the middle of a lecture to stare in silence at a student whose bodily behavior is being disruptive is a banal example of how silence speaks. In the context of Zen, Shakyamuni Buddha Holding up a Flower and Vimalakirti's 'thunderous silence' are touchstones for demonstrating how silence is linguistically potent, not impotent. "The logic of nonduality," as Hori explains, "when applied consistently, destroys the very notion of a separate and distinct realm of non-duality" (Hori 2000, 299). The logic of nonduality destroys any distinction between linguistic/dualistic experience and ineffable/nondualistic experience. Rather than thinking of Zen as a tradition that is looking to escape from language, Zen is oriented towards cultivating a relationship with language whereby dualistic categories of subjects and predicates can be employed in nondualistic ways. Metaphorically, rather than thinking that our 'cloudy' experiences of the world result from the fact that language is itself cloudy, Zen maintains that the cloudiness, or perhaps in some cases the smog, that drapes over one's experiences is conditioned by an inability to fully penetrate, realize and embody language, with all of its nuances. From a non-dualistic perspective, language that occludes is itself the very language that illuminates; hence the capping phrase "One word wraps up the entire net of teachings" (Jpn. *Ikku kōshu o sadamu*) (ZS 5.22). Ultimately, it is how we use language that determines whether we are in a linguistic 'fog of Zen-war.'

Drawing from comparative insights between Zen Buddhism and Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, Rupert Read also challenges the idea that the Zen phrase, "A separate transmission outside doctrine, not founded on words and letters" (Jpn. *Kyōge betsuden furu moji*) (ZS 8.97), logically entails that Zen practice is oriented towards discovering some non-linguistic truth that will reveal the 'true nature of things.' "In Zen and Wittgensteinian practice, one does not believe that the truth can be said. But one does not believe either that there is an unsayable truth…Zen and Wittgenstein, when seeing the world aright, take care not to make it seem like they are seeing something, or some truth, that cannot be put into words" (Read 2009, 22). According to Read's reasoning, which I believe Nietzsche

would agree with, it would be a mistake to think that the 'separate transmission' perspective is oriented towards realizing a non-linguistic goal. Rather, "the 'goal' is precisely to be at ease with and in the present moment. The skillful means of Zen are actually already the goal, surreptitiously" (Read 2009, 17). This non-dual means-ends (i.e. non-instrumentalist) perspective provides an alternative way by which we can participate with language without reifying the concepts and things we speak about.

> And so we see, crucially, that unless the great Zen masters who have brought Zen to the West – and Dōgen and (I would add) Nāgārjuna – and Wittgenstein are less subtle thinkers than I take them to be, they cannot be ultimately saying that reality is contradictory, nor are there true contradictions. For saying so makes the secret of their practice seem too like what is exactly the target of criticism in their practice. A "true contradiction" is something true that one can say about the meaning of life or some such topic. What Wittgensteinian psychology/therapy/philosophy/spiritual practice and Zen spiritual practice/psychology/therapy/thinking are interested in engendering is not anything that one can say. Not any kind of truth…No. Zen and Wittgenstein simply show how to change your life, your practice, your way, while leaving everything as it is. (Read 2009, 22-23)

In regards to Dōgen's language of morals, Wright, Hori, Heine and Read will be helpful for making my case for anti-cognitivism as metaethical counterpart to Dōgen's anti-realism. As I interpret Dōgen, anti-realism does not lead to the conclusion that there is nothing we can say about the moral life. Moral discourse is embedded within our everyday world and mode-of-being. However, this does not entail that our discourse on values and normative beliefs is an attempt to clarify or illuminate what is morally true; it is not theoretical, but rather, expressive and performative, vis-à-vis revealing and concealing perspectives. To expand upon this "non-instrumentalist" model of language, a model that attempts to avoid the reification of words, letters, concepts and the things that we refer to when speaking, there are some additional linguistic themes tied to Zen language in general, Dōgen in particular, that deserve consideration.

§5.3 How to Do Things with Zen "Words and Letters"

The way language is used in Zen is dependent upon the standpoint from which one is speaking. From a conventional standpoint, the words and letters one uses is the language conventionally used when buying groceries, giving directions or discussing political issues. From an ultimate standpoint, however,

because all things are understood to be empty, including language, the words and letters one uses to describe and prescribe X is not inherently real or true. In Zen, one can make use of words and letters in either conventional or ultimate ways: crooked (Jpn. *hen'i*) and straight (Jpn. *shōi*).

Hen'i, is the way one speaks from the conventional world of dualistic distinctions, whereas *shōi* is the way one speaks from the ultimate standpoint of nonduality (Miura and Sasaki 1965). According to Hori:

> In the Zen context […] *hen'i* and *shōi* do not distinguish two separate languages with different vocabularies; they distinguish two standpoints which use the same language and the same vocabulary but with different meaning. When the language is being used to indicate some aspect of the differentiated, the manifest, the conditioned, the realm of dualism, then it is expressing the standpoint of *hen'i.* The very same language, the very same sentence, can also be used to express some aspect of the undifferentiated, the unmanifest, the unconditioned, the realm of the nondual. When it does so, it is expressing the standpoint of *shōi.* This means that the Zen kōan and Zen language in general are full of puns in a special sense – words and phrases that are used with both Conventional and Ultimate meaning. (Hori 2000, 303)

For example, the phrase "One doesn't know the smell of one's own shit," can be expressed from both *hen'i* and *shōi* standpoints. From the standpoint of *hen'i*, the phrase can be interpreted to mean that one is not aware of their own self-centeredness; however, from the standpoint of *shōi,* the meaning is more like "one is not aware of one's own Buddha nature." From the perspective of *hen'i*, the word 'shit' reflects defilement, whereas from the ultimate perspective of *shō*i, because all things are empty, the very same word nondualistically reflects something pure; "unclean and impure, 'one's own shit' indicates immaculately clean and pure Buddha-nature" (Hori 2000, 303); hence the capping phrase, "Without cutting off delusive passion, enter nirvana," (Jpn. *Fudan bonnō nyū nehan*) (ZS 7.424). This relationship between conventional and ultimate standpoints of language, however, raises the following question: how does one know which of the two perspectives one is speaking? How does one learn 'how' to effectively and appropriately speak from the standpoints of *hen'i* and *shōi*? According to Hori, the answer resides in being able to distinguish between descriptive and performative speech acts.

In his book *How to Do Things With Words* (1962), John Austin introduces the distinction between constative and performative statements. In regards to the former, language is able to describe the world according to conventional subject/predicate relations, including "the table is brown," "fire is hot," and "willows are green." Descriptive speech acts such as these carve the world up into dualities that we accept as either conventionally true or false. However, not all speech acts are merely descriptive. Neither "I apologize," nor "I promise," are describing a particular state of affairs; rather, they are performative acts of speaking which are not true or false. "The term 'performative' will be used in a variety of cognate ways and constructions, much as the term 'imperative' is. The name is derived, of course, from 'perform', the usual verb with the noun 'action': it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action" (Austin 6, 1962). In the context of Zen literature, performative expressions, such as "go wash your bowls" often reflect a mode of speaking from the ultimate perspective of *shōi.* From this perspective, one expresses insight into emptiness and the non-dual nature of things by speaking without attachment to dualistic distinctions between subject-and-object, as well as between descriptive and performative words and phrases. From this ultimate perspective, the conventional rules of grammar and meanings of words are playfully stretched, reversed and rearranged. For example, as Hori explains, the unique quality of many Zen phrases and encounter dialogues is that a single verse/statement can be interpreted as descriptive and performative simultaneously.

> In Hekiganroku case I, Bodhidharma's answer "Not know!" to the emperor's question, "Who is it that stands before me?" is to be understood as both a description and a performance. As a descriptive, "Not know!" refuses to answer the question. As performance, Bodhidharma presents nonduality itself. In Mumonkan case 7, a monk asked Jōshū, "I have entered the monastery. Please teach me." Jōshū asked, "Have you finished eating your rice gruel?" The monk said, "I have finished." Jōshū said, "Go wash your bowl." This answer, "Go wash your bowl," is not a description but a performance. But it can be taken as performance at more than one level. If one thinks that the new monk is merely asking for instruction in monastery regulations, then "Go wash your bowl" is a concrete performance of one such regulation. But if we take the monk's question as a direct request to Jōshū, "Show me your non-duality" in the guise of a question "Please teach me" then Jōshū's "Go wash your bowl" is a performance of non-duality dressed up as a performance of monastery regulation and a fitting answer to the monk's question. (Hori 305-306)

This relationship between *hen'i* and *shōi*, conventional and ultimate standpoints, descriptive and performative speech acts, opens up a dynamic arena of language-games whereby the meanings of Zen phrases are syntax dependent.

Zen phrases and dialogues challenge the conventional maxim "actions speak louder than words," by playfully showing that words and letters are actions. The meanings of Zen phrases and dialogues is contingent upon the "realization of non-duality within ordinary conventional experience […] a breakthrough not out of, but into, conventional consciousness" (Hori 2000 307). "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" While conventionally bewitching, this *kōan*, in the context of duality and non-duality, is metaphorically meaningful. As Hori maintains, we know the world of duality just as we know the sound of two hands clapping; the question Zen pushes us to consider is what is nonduality? "What" is the sound of one hand clapping? What is the "sound!"

Dōgen's literary style employs many of these playful strategies to convey a nondual understanding through conventional subjects and predicates. While the *kōan* curriculum is regarded as one of the salient differences between *Rinzai* Zen practice, where it is included, and Dōgen's *Sōtō* tradition, wherein it is not, it would be mistake to think that *kōan* were not part of the Dōgen's Zen perspective. For example, Steve Heine's *Dōgen and the Kōan tradition: A Tale of two Shōbōgenzō Texts* (1994), provides extensive research and analysis that shows:

> Dōgen's view is that kōan as the raw material for philosophical commentary related to religious praxis has an innate flexibility and open-endedness of utility that does not stand in contrast to but derived from within the very rhetorical structure of the source dialogue itself to generate multidimensional implications. He seems to suggest that the kōan should be seen not as a psychological tool that brings one to a labyrinthine impasse based on the paradoxically of speech and silence, but as a discursive means of generating shifting, self-displacing (and thereby self-correcting) parallactical perspectives. (Heine 1994, 7)

For example, in the fascicle *Busshō*, "Buddha-nature," Dōgen treats several *kōan* and encounter dialogues central to Zen's literary curriculum, including an exchange between the fourth and fifth patriarchs; therein the fourth patriarch asked the fifth, Zen master Daiman, "What is your name?" In response:

> The master answers, "I have a name, but it is not an ordinary name."

> The patriarch says, "What name is it?
>
> The master answers, "It is Buddha-nature."
>
> The patriarch says, "You are without Buddha nature."
>
> The master replies, "The Buddha-nature is emptiness, so we call it being without." (Dōgen 1994, 7-8)

Now consider Dōgen's commentary on this exchange:

> Thus, when we thoroughly investigate the words of these ancestral masters, there is meaning in the fourth patriarch's saying "*What is your name*." In the past there were people described as "*A person of What country*" and there were names described as "*What name*" – [one person] was stating to another, "Your name is *What*!" It was like saying, for example, "*I am like that, and you are also like that.*"
>
> The fifth patriarch says, "*I have a name, but it is not an ordinary name*." In other words, "*Existence* is the name" – not an ordinary name, for an ordinary name is not right for *Existence here and now*."
>
> In the fourth patriarch's words, "*What name is it*?" "*What means This*, and he has dealt with *This* as *What*, which is a name. The realization based on *This*, and the realization of *This* is the function of *What*. The name is *This*, and is *What*. We make it into mugwort tea, make it into green tea, and make it into everyday tea and meals. (Dōgen 1994, 8-9)

In this commentary Dōgen is clearly playing with conventional terms in a way that expands the meaning of their use. The word 'what' is a case in point. By turning this interrogative pronoun into a predicate, Dōgen is able to creatively express the inexpressible – emptiness – through conventional words and letters. We ordinarily use the pronoun 'what' to inquire into some matter like the time of day (What time is it?), or respond to an awkward situation ("What are ***you*** doing here?) etc. By using 'what' as a predicate to characterize a subject, he is, ultimately, identifying things as an open question; 'what' is emptiness itself! Following Steven Heine's lead, Dōgen's 'wordplay,' "takes license to alter the dialogues, recasting the original wording to reflect his view that reality is dynamic rather than static. The immediacy of enlightenment is experienced in the words of the master's interpretations, instead of as an occurrence recalled from the past or anticipated in the future" (Heine 2020, 154). By recognizing and understanding this creatively nuanced philosophy of language, we will be able to make sense of Dōgen's metaethical perspective, vis-à-vis the nature of normative propositions.

§5.4 Dōgen's Language of Morals: "Don't be unclear about cause and effect"

So far, this chapter has explored some general features of Zen's philosophy of language in light of *kōan* literature and Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō*. While our treatment was not exhaustive, our focus upon the distinction between *hen'i* and *shōi* will be particularly helpful for making further sense of Dōgen's philosophy of language, specifically in regards to the nature of normative judgments and his metaethical views about karma.

In the context of morality, we find Dōgen employing many of the aforementioned literary techniques so as to express the nature of right and wrong action. In *Shoaku-Makusa,* "Not Committing Wrongs," Dōgen writes from a position of both *hen'i* and *shōi* when he comments on the Buddhist verse:

> Not to commit wrongs,
> To practice the many kinds of right,
> Naturally purifies the mind:
> this is the teachings of the buddhas. (Dōgen 1994, 97)

From the perspective of *hen'i* – conventional language – Dōgen writes:

> This teaching, as the Universal Precept of the ancestral patriarchs, the Seven Buddhas, has been authentically transmitted from buddhas to later buddhas, and later buddhas have received transmission from former buddhas. It is not only of the Seven Buddhas: *It is the teaching of all the buddhas*. We should consider this principle and master it in practice. These words of Dharma of the Seven Buddhas always sound like words of Dharma of Seven Buddhas. What has been transmitted and been received one-to-one is just that clarification of the real situation at this concrete place. This already is the teaching of the buddhas; it is the teaching, practice, and experience of hundreds, thousands, and tens of thousands of buddhas. (Dōgen 1994, 98)

The "universal precept"[120] Dōgen references here is treated as 'something' that can be transmitted from one person to another; the precept, conventionally speaking, is 'the teaching,' and it can be dualistically set apart from other teachings and practices. However, Dōgen also treats this universal precept from the standpoint of *shōi*, thereby dissolving firm dualistic subject and predicate distinctions. For example,

[120] As I noted in the previous chapter, the "universal precept" is from the *Dhammapada*: "Avoid all evil, cultivate the good, purify your mind: this sums up the teaching of the Buddhas" (Easwaran 1986, p. 132).

when commenting on the first line of the universal precept, Dōgen turns the meaning of 'not committing' from a performative command into a predicate, vis-à-vis emptiness-Buddha-Nature.

> The seeds of Buddhahood arise from conditions and, this being so, conditions arise from the seeds of Buddhahood. It is not that wrongs do not exist; they are nothing other than not committing. It is not that wrongs exist; they are nothing other than not committing. Wrongs are not immaterial; they are not committing. Wrongs are not material; they are not committing. Wrongs are not "not committing;" they are nothing other than not committing. […] The Buddhas are neither existence nor nonexistence; they are not committing. Such things as an outdoor pillar, a stone lantern, a whisk, and a staff are neither existence nor nonexistence; [they] are not committing. The self is neither existence nor nonexistence; it is not committing. Learning in practice like this is the realized Universe and it is Universal realization – we consider it from the standpoint of the subject and we consider it from the standpoint of the object. (Dōgen 1994, 102)

For Dōgen there are two ways in which we can speak and write about values and normative judgments. From the conventional standpoint, ordinary lexical meanings for subject/predicate terms are quite effective for specifying views and positions. For example, in *Keisi-Sanshiki*, "The Voices of the River-Valley and the Form of the Mountains," Dōgen states that one ought not, "use Buddhism as a bridge to fame and gain" (Dōgen 1994, p. 90); or, in *Fukanzazengi*, "Universally Recommended Instructions for Zazen" he is conventionally unambiguous when he expresses the following capping phrase, "Don't think about good or evil," (Jpn. *Isaai no zen'aku subete shiryō suru nakare*) (ZS 8.27). However, from the ultimate standpoint, ordinary lexical meanings and conventional uses of moral language are often rearranged, such as the pronoun 'what' or the verb 'commit', as evidenced in the above passages. Herein, Dōgen's 'not committing' performatively conditions a state of *aporia* which, in turn, embodies the conventional "Don't think about good or evil." From this standpoint, Dōgen creatively expresses the inexpressible without having to abandon or resist language. To make this point clearer, vis-à-vis morality and right action, let us turn to Dōgen's examination of karma.

Since karma is central to the subject matter of ethics in Buddhism, it is no surprise that Dōgen treats such in a number of fascicles from both conventional and ultimate perspectives. From the conventional perspective, karma and the Mahāyāna philosophy of causality is, according to Dōgen's *Shinjin-Inga*, "Deep Belief in Cause and Effect," what separates Buddhist traditions from other East

Asian philosophies, including Confucianism and Daoism: "The truth of cause and effect is not understood by the likes of Confucius and Lao Tzu. It is clarified and transmitted only by buddhas and patriarchs" (Dōgen 1994, 194).[121] In *kōan* literature, the philosophy of karma is framed by the tale of Hyakujo and the Fox in *Mumonkan kōan* case 2; a tale about the relationship between karma and enlightenment that was well favored by Dōgen as it is referenced and treated in more than one fascicle. In *Shinjin-Inga* Dōgen provides a thoroughgoing commentary of the Hyakujo and the Fox *kōan* in order to challenge the view that Zen is a practice that transcends normative causality. The *kōan* opens with an exchange between a Zen master and an old man, whereby the master questions the old man in a way that is similar to the exchange between the Fourth and Fifth patriarchs in *Busshō*.

> The master eventually asks him, "What person is this standing before me?"
>
> The old man answers, "I am not a person. In the past age of Kāśyapa Buddha, I used to preside over this mountain. Once a student asked me, 'Do even people in the state of great practice fall into cause and effect, or not?' I answered, "They do not fall into cause and effect." Since then I have fallen into the body of a wild fox for five hundred lives. Now I beg you, Master, to say for me words of transformation. I long to be rid of the body of a wild fox." Then he asks, "Do even people in the state of great practice fall into cause and effect, or not?"
>
> Master says, "Do not be unclear about cause and effect." (Dōgen 1994, 187-188)

[121] According to Chung-ying Cheng, Confucian and Taoist philosophies of causality can be understood in the following ways: (1) causality as a principle of holistic unity; (2) causality as the principle of internal life-movement; and (3) causality as the principle of organic balance (Cheng 1991). In regards to (1), "all things in the world are unified as a whole through their being continuously generated from the same source or origin. […] All things, therefore, are one under the image of *Tao* or Heaven" (Cheng 1991, 98). In regards to (2), "all things in the world have an intrinsic life force which moves them in a way in which motion is not imposed from other things or a God but is derived from the inexhaustible source of energy of life, which is the Way" (Cheng 1991, 98). And, in regards to (3), "all things and processes in the world are related in a process which proceed a balance and a harmony. […] That we must understand balance in a dynamical and actual sense is crucial. The yin-yang polarities with their contrary and complementary qualities clearly illustrate the example of processes toward the balance and harmony of things" (Cheng 1991, 99). This tripartite theory of causality is, in light of dialectical logic, different from *Madhyamaka* theories of causation which maintains that there is no inherent distinction between causes and effects, and thus, no inherent causation proper (Cheng 1991). Based upon Cheng's research, the fact that Dōgen's Zen perspective has roots in *Madhyamaka*, it seems reasonable that Dōgen would be critical of Confucian and Daoist conceptions of causality. Moreover, one does not find within Confucian and Daoist perspectives of causality specific teachings that comparatively reflect Buddhist theories of karma and rebirth, which seems to be Dōgen's underlying point in *Shinjin-Inga*.

Following from the master's "Do not be unclear about cause and effect," the old man is reported to have experienced realization.

Dōgen centers his commentary of this *kōan* upon the word "transformation" – *ichitengo*, or "one-turn words"[122] – when he states:

> Still, people of learning in practice are not clear about the truth of cause and effect, and they make the mistake of idly negating cause and effect. It is pitiful that, with the wind of decay blowing all around, the patriarch's truth has slipped into decline. "They do not fall into cause and effect" is just the negation of cause and effect, as a result of which the negator falls into bad states. "Do not be unclear about cause and effect" evidently is deep belief in cause and effect, as a result of which the listener gets rid of bad states. We should not wonder at this and should not doubt it. Among people of recent generations who profess to be "students of the way of Zen practice," most have negated cause and effect. How do we know that they have negated cause and effect? Namely because they have considered that "do not fall" and "do not be unclear" amount to the same and are not different. Hence we know that they have negated cause and effect. (Dōgen 1994, 188-189)

In this commentary, Dōgen is clearly speaking from a conventional standpoint of *hen'i.* The claim that he is making is that many students of Buddhism, due to their fallacious tendency to equivocate the meaning "do not fall" with "do not be unclear," have negated causality because "not falling into cause and effect" implies being invulnerable to conventional views of karma, such as *kusala,* the skillfulness which enables one to abstain from actions that undermine spiritual development, and *punna,* the beneficial accumulation of consequences, in early Indian Buddhism. According to Dōgen, it is a mistake to think that Zen practice completely transcends the everyday conventional world. As he states later in his commentary, "The truth of the present Hyakujo's not being unclear about cause and effect is, "not to be ignorant of cause and effect. So the principle is evident that if we initiate cause, we will feel the effect" (Dōgen 1994, 190). Since cause and effect are conventionally true, we ought not be ignorant of the many causal ways that

[122] As Wright explains, "The focal word or phrase that seemed to embody this transformative power in an "encounter dialogue" came to be called a "turning word" (*ch'uan-you*), the word upon which the point of the encounter "turns" and the word holding the power to turn the mind of participants, audience, or reader" (Wright; 1998, 102). Indeed, the holding up of the flower, which caused Mahakasyapa to break into a smile could be seen as a turning word vis-à-vis silence. "Turning words were not simply a set of particularly powerful or efficacious symbols. No list of them could be produced. All words gained their power from the situation in which they were spoken, hear, or read" (Wright 1998, 102-103).

living beings are affected, for better or for worse, by the way we comport ourselves. Moreover, according to Dōgen, to deny cause and effect is simply to deny Buddhism proper: "Clearly we should know that to deny the existence of cause and effect, whether in the world or beyond the world, must be non-Buddhism" (Dōgen 1994, 190). Thus, from a conventional standpoint, Dōgen believes we can provide some justification for our normative beliefs in light of the Buddhist teachings of karma.[123]

Notwithstanding Dōgen's conventional standpoint on, "do not be unclear about cause and effect," it would be a mistake to think that he believed that there is some essence of cause and effect that is ultimately real and/or true, and, that our conventional way of speaking about cause and effect is the only way to speak about causality. Beginning with the former, Dōgen appeals to Nāgārjuna as a 'good counselor' for understanding cause and effect: "One who has long studied under a true good counselor can never hold wrong opinions such as the negation of cause and effect. We should profoundly believe in and admire, and should humbly receive upon the head the benevolent instruction of the ancestral Master Nāgārjuna" (Dōgen 1994, 191). What we know about Nāgārjuna's view of causality is that while it is not the case that causality does not exist, it is also not the case that causality is essentially real. As Nāgārjuna explains in the first chapter of the *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*, while causation conventionally exists, it is ultimately empty. In fact, according to his analytic line of reasoning, our conventional understanding of cause and effect only makes sense because all causal conditions are empty. This empty-view of causality is perhaps best captured by Dōgen's use of the firewood and ash metaphor in *Genjō Kōan*.

> If we become familiar with action and come back to this concrete place, the truth is evident that the myriad of dharmas are not self. Firewood becomes ash; it can never go back to being firewood. Nevertheless, we should not take the view that ash is its future and firewood is its past. Remember, firewood abides in the place of firewood in the Dharma. It has a past and a future. Although it has a past and future, the past and future are cut off. Ash exists in the place of ash in the Dharma. It has a past and it has a future. The firewood, after becoming ash, does not again

[123] It is important to note that such justification does not imply that Dōgen is a realist from a conventional standpoint. For example, one can justify their belief as to why everyone should not text and drive at the same time while also recognizing that there are no mind-independent values or normative truths, including that of "don't text and drive at the same time." In short, justificatory reasons do not entail any commitment to realism.

> become firewood. Similarly, human beings, after death, do not live again. At the same time, it is an established custom in the Buddha-Dharma not to say that life turns into death. This is why we speak of no appearance. And, it is the Buddha's preaching established in [the turning of] the Dharma-wheel that death does not turn into life. This why we speak of no disappearance. Life is an instantaneous situation, and death is also an instantaneous situation. It is the same, for example, with winter and spring. We do not think that winter becomes spring, and we do not say that spring becomes summer. (Dōgen 1994, 34)

Conventionally we do say "the log" turned to "ash," or that "winter has finally turned into spring;" these expressions are ubiquitous. However, from an ultimate perspective of emptiness, there is no inherent firewood that exists which is transformed into ash; nor is there some 'thing' that we actually verify as 'causality' that is independent of the instantaneous moments of things being 'firewood' and thereby, moment-by-moment, 'turning into ash.' Causality is empty, and so, not real.

In the context of Dōgen's *Shushōgi, The Meaning of Practice and Verification,* Steven DeCaroli offers some insightful reflections on the philosophical import of the fox *kōan,* vis-à-vis karma. He notes that, "the meaning of karma has often been misconstrued, especially in the West where it is used colloquially as a synonym for fate or providential justice. Within the Buddhist context," particularly in regards to Zen, "karma, which literally means volitional action or deed, has nothing to do with either reward or punishment, but it is rather an expression of the ego" (DeCaroli 2016; 99). As an expression of the ego, we are able to make sense of the relationship between karma and enlightenment. As DeCaroli explains, "To be enlightened, therefore, is not to end karma, but to alter our awareness so that karma and mind are no longer two things. […] Strictly speaking, then, to be enlightened is to stand in no relation whatsoever to karma. Where there is no distance, there is no relation" (DeCaroli 2016, 100-101). This non-dual interpretation of karma is compelling. On the one hand it avoids the essentialist mistake of thinking that karma is some entity independent of us to which we are accountable. On the other hand, it preserves the normative importance of karma for our everyday lives. Thus, "Karma is the name given to a self-generated pattern of actions that establish an inside, which manifest an outside relation to which we are normatively related (DeCaroli 2016, 100). Karma is, through and through, mind-dependent, and so, ipso facto, not essentially real.

In the same non-essentialist light as DeCaroli, Shūdō Brian Schroeder identifies and explains the relationship between karma and *zazen*, which is central to Dōgen's ethical practice. As Dōgen prescriptively writes in the *Fukanzazengi*, "Universally Recommended Instructions for *Zazen*", practitioners of *zazen* should not think about karmic merit or demerit; "we should not think 'good' or 'bad.' To see it otherwise is to essentialize karma, that is, reduce it to a fixed status or understand it as fundamentally unchanging in its expression" (Schroeder 2016, 41). Moreover, since karma is, as DeCaroli noted above, dependent upon the "self," it logically follows that, as Schroeder explains, "to essentialize karma is also to do the same to the self, since the self and its actions are a unity" (Schroeder 2016, 41). For Dōgen, *zazen* opens up a non-essentialist moral perspective whereby practitioners are able to realize that they are not fatalistically bound to karma.

> Turning either karma or the self into any form of "essence" necessarily results in positing a dualism on the metaphysical (for example, soul/body), ontological (agent/action), and epistemological (knower/known) levels. From a Buddhist standpoint, such dualisms are conceptual formations. […] Understanding that we are not bound by karma, that we are free to redirect its flow or movement and thereby alter the constellation of causal relations, is a major aspect of the awakened mind. (Schroeder 2016, 41).

Ultimately, this non-essentialist perspective of karma challenges several early Buddhist philosophical commitments, including *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa,* as well as later Mahāyāna perspectives, including the *tathāgatagarbha*, or Buddha-nature. As I noted in Chapter three, the philosophy of Buddha-nature is tied to the doctrine of original enlightenment (Jpn. *hongaku*); one of Dōgen's concerns with this philosophy was that it gave rise to licensed evil, vis-à-vis 'committing evil without obstruction' (Jpn. *zōaku muge*). Rather than original enlightenment providing a license to commit evil without having to face karmic consequneces, Dōgen's Zen perspective of causality, vis-à-vis nonduality of practice and realization, maintains that the realization of Buddha-nature is not obstructed by the evil one has committed. As I plan to show in the next chapter, for Dōgen, *zazen* is, as a normative practice, sufficient for realizing Buddha Nature regardless of one's karma.

This empty perspective on karma finds its expressive/performative voice of *shōi* in *Shoaku-Makusa*, when Dōgen states:

> In becoming a Buddhist patriarch, we do not destroy the living being, do not detract from it, and do not lose it; nevertheless, we have got rid of it. We cause right-and-wrong, cause-and-effect, to practice; but this does not mean disturbing, or intentionally producing, cause-and-effect. Cause-and-effect itself, at times, makes us practice. The state in which the original features of cause-and-effect have already become conspicuous is not committing, it is [the state] without appearance, it is [the state] without constancy, it is not being unclear, and it is not falling down – because it is the state in which body and mind have fallen way. (Dōgen 1994, 102)

Like we have seen in other passages, the negative use of the verb "committing" is transformed into an adjective for describing emptiness. "Not committing" is the realization that the ultimate nature of things is empty (i.e. uncreated (Jpn. *mushō*)); and, in regards to karma, it is the realization of "not being unclear about cause and effect." For Dōgen this ultimate standpoint of "not committing" is contingent, as evidenced in the last line of the passage, upon dropping off body-mind (Jpn. *shinjin datsuraku*), a phenomenological mode of awareness that is conditioned by the practice of *zazen*. In the next chapter we will explore Dōgen's philosophy of *zazen* as a normative practice in closer detail.

What we can discern in Dōgen's writings on karma is that from a conventional standpoint, *hen'i*, we are able to speak about the ordinary conditions that deserve our mindful consideration when deciding upon and executing a particular action. At the same time, one can speak about karma and moral actions from an ultimate standpoint, *shōi*, whereby language itself embodies our karma, thus conditioning karmic situations, including encounter dialogues between Zen masters and monks. Within these dialogues, words and letters are not intended to describe what is or is not the case; instead, from the standpoint of *shōi*, language is performative, and thus used in order to affect the perspective of others. As we saw in the fox *kōan*, words and expressions can have a transformative impact upon the body-and-mind of other beings. To be able to fully appreciate the range of sayings and expressions Dōgen stitches together throughout his writings, it is important to be mindful of these 'practices' of words and letters. Contrary to the instrumentalist model of language, the karma of words and letters is embedded within our experience of the world and how we comport ourselves.

§5.5 A Separate Transmission Outside of Ethics?

It is important to note before closing our treatment of Dōgen's philosophy of language, vis-à-vis ethics, that *hen'i* and *shōi* do not exhaust the entirety of Dōgen's practice of words and letters as "separate transmission outside the teachings." In his article "The Reason of Words and Letters: Dōgen and Kōan Language" (1985), Hee-Jin Kim identifies seven facets that constitute the dynamic nature of Dōgen's philosophy of language: (1) Transposition of Lexical components; (2) Semantic Reconstruction Through Syntactic Change; (3) Explication of Semantic Attributes; (4) Reflexive, Self-causative Utterances; (5) The Upgrading of Common-place Notions and Use of Neglected Metaphors; (6) The Use of Homophonous Expressions; and (7) Reinterpretation Based on the Principle of Absolute Nonduality/Absolute Emptiness. To flesh out each of these facets will take us beyond the scope of our inquiry. However, to set the stage for the next chapter, I do think it is important to devote some attention to (7).

As Kim explains, "If there is any single principle central to Dōgen's life and thought, it is that of absolute emptiness, as appropriated in the context of realization" (Kim 1985, 74). Thus we find the logic of emptiness woven throughout many of Dōgen's examinations of metaphysical, epistemological, soteriological and ethical matters. In regards to his ethics, the logic of emptiness allows Dōgen to turn a negative imperative "Do not commit any evil" into an indicative "The enlightened one does not commit evil." In *Shoaku-Makusa*, Dōgen's expression of, 'Do not commit any evil,' "is not to be taken as a moral imperative, whether self-imposed by autonomous conscience or inculcated by heteronomous impositions, but rather as the transformative reality of realization, whose mystery lies in one's resolve never to commit any evil" (Kim 1985, 77). As we noted in the previous chapter, all values are empty, and so, 'uncreated' (Jpn. *mushō*). What this means is that, "realization both transcends good and evil and is at the same time profoundly involved with good and evil. In this way, for Dōgen, morality and ethics, as well as language and intellect, become an integral component of spirituality" (Kim 1985 77).

According to Kim, as well as Van der Braak, the emptiness of moral values and normative principles does not entail that Zen is "a separate transmission outside of ethics." As Van der Braak states, "For Dōgen, enlightenment is not a nondualistic state of mind where good and evil have been eradicated; it is a nondual perspective that fully clarifies and penetrates good and evil. Enlightenment doesn't liberate us from good and evil; it increasingly confronts us with good and evil" (Van der Braak 2011, 183-184). To fully penetrate good and evil, as I have argued up until this point, is to recognize that good and evil are empty (i.e. anti-realism), which is not a complete negation of the conventional world of everyday value judgments and normative beliefs. And, as noted in the previous chapter, since Dōgen is a relativist about conventional Buddhist ethics (i.e. it is not expected that a non-Buddhist would conventionally honor the precepts), the nature of normative beliefs and prescriptions in Buddhism, including the precepts, are not like the "thou shalt" commandments we find in Judeo-Christianity whose metaethical status is believed to be mind-independent. Rather, the precepts are "vows that embody the way of the bodhisattva" (Van der Braak, 184). Since taking the vows to uphold and fulfill the Buddhist precepts are relative to Zen practitioners/*bodhisattvas*, we ought not to think that vows apply to all other non-Buddhists. Moreover, we ought not think that honoring the precepts and taking the vows requires any insight into some moral truth or principle that motivates one to uphold such. If upholding the precepts is the way of the *bodhisattva* as Van der Braak asserts, I contend that what motivates the pursuit of this path is compassion, great-compassion (Skt. *mahā-karuna*) which is affective, not cognitive.

Finally, it is important to also mention that (7), "Reinterpretation Based on the Principle of Absolute Nonduality/Absolute Emptiness," provides a logical basis for Dōgen's use of negatives, which are salient to terms like *mushō* and *makusa*. As Kim notes, Dōgen's use of negation serves two functions:

> First it works as the radical negation of both components of an antithesis, avoiding the privileging of one over the other. Thus it constantly rejects the reification of its own negating activity in any objective, referential manner. Second, it functions as an equally radical affirmation of dynamic, creative reality in the realm of dualities and antithesis. (Kim 1985, 77)

In the next chapter we shall see how Dōgen's use of negatives vis-à-vis thinking is helpful for understanding the relationship between *zazen* and ethics. For right now, I think it is important to note that

if we use (7) for thinking about Dōgen's metaethical perspective, then in light of what we have covered in this chapter, as well as in Chapter three and Chapter four, the negative characterization of anti-cognitivism perhaps best captures how Dōgen's understands the nature of moral propositions. Dōgen does not believe that moral propositions describe mind-independent facts or truths about the world; and, while he does maintain that we can communicate moral values from both conventional, *hen'i*, and ultimate standpoints, *shōi*, such expressions are not simply reducible to feelings as non-cognitivist ultimately believe. Rather, it is likely that Dōgen would agree with Nietzsche's perspective that language is an antecedent condition for conscious experiences, including our awareness of our emotional and attitudinal states. Thus while conventional normative judgments and propositions involve deliberation and reflection, from an ultimate standpoint, *shōi*, the performative experience is pre-reflective as there is no distinction between a subject and object of experience. Herein, the performative experience could be understood as ascending from what Dōgen regards as power, mystical power (Jpn. *jinzu*), whereby words have the capacity to express the inexpressible. In the context of the "abundant hands and eyes" metaphor[124] that is often used in Zen for thinking about the vows of the bodhisattva of compassion, in his fascicle *Kannon*, Dōgen waxes poetically: "the virtue of hands and eyes should not be seeing, practicing, or preaching that recognizes 'rightness'" (Dōgen 1994, 216). Moral propositions, from Dōgen's perspective are not about what is objectively or cognitively right or wrong, good or bad. Rather, from the perspective of 'abundant hands and eyes,' "when the ineffable expresses the truth we should not expect to be able to express the whole of hands and eyes" (Dōgen 1994, 215). From an anti-cognitivist standpoint, while there are limitations in regards to what our words mean, and what they can say, our use of language

[124] This metaphor is quite unique. To begin unpacking it, consider your capacity to juggle tennis balls. Many of us find the act of juggling three or more balls to be difficult. Similar to juggling, it seems incredibly daunting to intentionally execute the abundant hands, one thousand in total, that Kannon embodies. To make use of abundant hands without getting tied up by one's own limbs entails being able to maintain a mindful state of consciousness whereby there is no separation between subject and object. In Chapter six, we shall see how this metaphor is employed so to characterize the state of *wu-wei*, non-action vis- à-vis non-thinking (Jpn. *hishiryō*).

proper can reveal and open up new perspectives, vis-à-vis new 'hands and eyes;' hence, "while we are experiencing one side, we are blind to the other side" (Dōgen 1994, 34).

§5.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter we examined the role and nature of language in Zen practice and literature in light of the Buddhist philosophy of emptiness and the logic of non-duality. By borrowing insights from Dale S. Wright, Victor Sōgen Hori, Steven Heine and Rupert Read, we were able to see how language is not reducible to an instrumentalist conceptual scheme, but rather is embedded within our very experiences, including non-theoretical perception. From this nondual perspective, which obliterates any distinction between linguistic and non-linguistic experiences, and in turn, overturns simplistic conceptions of Zen as ineffable, we were able to see how Zen language can operate on both conventional, *hen-i*, and ultimate, *shōi*, levels. From the standpoint of *hen-i*, words and letters conventionally describe phenomenal things and events; from the standpoint of *shōi*, words and letters are the performative substance of actions and events. Between these two standpoints, Zen is able to make use words of letters without reifying language, nor the things/events that words refer to and signify. Hermeneutically, we saw that this distinction between *hen-i* and *shōi* is helpful for making sense of Dōgen's writings on ethics. In *Shoaku-Makusa*, for example, we discovered that Dōgen is engaged in both conventional and ultimate modes of discourse, vis-à-vis karma; and, with the assistance of DeCaroli and Schroeder, we discovered that karma is, according to Dōgen's perspective, mind-dependent, non-essentialist and relative. With the help of Kim and Van der Braak, we noted that Zen is not a "separate transmission outside of ethics;" rather, the moral life, particularly as it is embodied by the *bodhisattva's* vows, is salient to "awakening the mind." All in all, we were able to see how an anti-cognitivist interpretation of Dōgen's language of morals is consistent with his anti-realist perspective that all values are *mushō*, which in turn finds its poetic voice through *shōi*, and our performative use and embodiment of words and letters. In the next chapter we shall turn our attention to Dōgen's writings and philosophy of *zazen* in order to explore the relationship between meditation, the realization of emptiness, and ethics. Therein I shall specify further how anti-cognitivism

helps illuminate an understanding of Dōgen's metaethical practice in ways that the anti-realist standpoints of error theory, fictionalism and non-cognitivism are unable to do.

Chapter Six

Mountain Still State: Normative Non-Thinking and The Metaethics of Meditation

§6.1 *Chapter Overview*

The goal of this chapter is to explore the philosophical interface between the Mahāyāna philosophy of emptiness, meditation and ethics within the context of Dōgen's writings, particularly the *Shōbōgenzō*. Our treatment will oscillate around Dōgen's phenomenology of non-thinking (Ch. *fēi sī liang*; Jpn. *hishiryō*) that emerges from insight into the emptiness/non-essentialism of all existing things. In this chapter, it is my goal to defend the following argument:

P1. *Zazen* is central to Dōgen's ethical practice/outlook.
P2. Non-thinking is central to Dōgen's practice of *zazen*.
C. Therefore, non-thinking is central to Dogen's ethical practice/outlook.

By exploring the literature that supports this deduction, vis-à-vis *zazen* as a normative practice, we shall be able to flesh out salient features of Dōgen's anti-realism whereby all values are uncreated/unborn (Jpn. *mushō*) and that normative propositions are anti-cognitive. More specifically, we shall see how non-thinking helps clarify Dōgen's expression "not committing" (Jpn. *makusa*) from the fascicle *Shoaku-Makusa*, as a Daoist/Zen perspective of non-action (Ch. *wu-wi*). By highlighting the connection between non-thinking and Dōgen's metaethics, I plan to conclude that his teachings and instructions for practicing *zazen* reveal a praxis-oriented, way-seeking philosophy that embodies anti-realist and anti-cognitive perspectives. The practice of *zazen* is itself the authentic realization of Buddha-nature, a realization that is contingent upon the dropping off of body-mind (Jpn. s*hinjin-datsuraku*), which is in turn an antecedent condition for revealing an attitudinal horizon of 'great compassion' (Skt. *mahā-karuna*). Thus, by building upon the perspectives of various Dōgen scholars, including Hee-Jin Kim, Thomas Kasulis, Steven Heine, Kampū Bret Davis, Tetsuzen Jason M. Wirth, André van der Braak and Jien Erin McCarthy, I plan to show that the practice of *zazen* and the phenomenology of non-thinking is how conventional moral discourse and prescriptions are justified. In Zen, conventional normative judgments

are justified through practice rather than through an additional metaethical theory. For Dōgen, this is precisely non-thinking (i.e. anti-cognitivism) embodied within the vows of the *bodhisattva.*

§ 6.2 Zazen-Only: The Pivot of Dōgen's Ethical Praxis

As I noted in Chapter three, the first essay Dōgen composed after returning from China was the *Fukanzazengi, "*Universally Recommended Instructions for *Zazen*." In it, Dōgen provides the basic instructions for students on the embodied technique of *zazen*, as well as poetic allusions to the phenomenology of realizing Buddha-nature via dropping off body-mind (Jpn. *shinjin datsuraku*). While his instructions in this manual are, as Kim notes, "brief and minimalist," Dōgen does go to great lengths to treat and defend the practice of *zazen* in other fascicles throughout the *Shōbōgenzō,* including *Bendōwa,* "A Talk on Pursuing the Truth," and *Zazenshin,* "A Needle for *Zazen*."

In the *Bendōwa* fascicle, as I noted in Chapter three, Dōgen defends the practice of *zazen* by: (1) appealing to the historical tradition of Buddhism; and (2) creating a question and answer dialogue whereby an unknown interlocutor presses Dōgen to explain why it is the case that *zazen*, and only *zazen*, is the central practice, "authentic gate," for realization. For example, in regards to (2), Dōgen states, "The Great Master Sakyamuni exactly transmitted, as the authentic tradition, this subtle method of grasping the state of truth, and the *tathāgatas* of the three times all attained the truth through Zazen" (Dōgen 1994, 7). According to Dōgen, the standard rituals and teachings that constitute a Buddhist way of life, for both monastic and lay practitioners, including burning incense, prostrations and sutra-chanting, are simply inferior to practicing *zazen*. His defense of this normative judgment – that *zazen* is the authentic gate for realizing Buddha-nature – is framed along virtue-theoretical lines.[125] When pressed to explain why

[125] In Chapter two, I noted that Bret Davis extends both consequentialist and virtue theoretical labels to Dōgen's normative outlook and practice. In regards to consequentialism, I argued in Chapter three that this characterization does not accurately capture Dōgen's normative perspective which avoids firm dualistic distinctions between means and ends, action and consequences. However, in regards to latter, virtue theory, I contend that this is a promising characterization, particularly if explored on its own terms, and in dialogue with Nietzsche.

chanting sutras and reciting the names of Buddha's ought not be regarded as causes and conditions for enlightenment, Dōgen states:

> Do you know for yourself any virtue that is gained from practices such as reading sutras and reciting names of Buddhas? It is very unreliable to think that only to wag the tongue and to raise the voice has the virtue of the Buddha's work. […] Trying to arrive at the Buddha's state of truth [only] through action of mouth, stupidly chanting thousands or tens of thousands of times, is like hoping to reach [the south country of] Etzu by pointing a carriage towards the north. Or it is like trying to put a square peg into a round hole. Reading sentences while remaining ignorant of how to practice [is like] a student of medicine forgetting how to compound medications. What use is that? Those who chant endlessly are like frogs in a spring paddy field, croaking day and night. In the end it is all useless. (Dōgen 1994, 7-8)

Herein, while Dōgen's response is rhetorical and *ad hominem*, his standpoint is not without religious-philosophical reasons. Similar to receiving and upholding the monastic precepts, there is good reason to believe that chanting sutras and reciting the names of Buddhas are ceremonial acts.[126] And while ceremonial acts help cultivate good character, particularly from a Confucian perspective,[127] it is not obvious that they will condition the kinds of virtues embodied by *bodhisattvas* and buddha's. For example, imagine a person who has never studied Buddhist philosophy, and cannot understand the language of the *sūtra's* that are recited daily within the monastery one is practicing. Notwithstanding the fact, as I noted in Chapter three, that Dōgen valued ceremonial expressions like receiving the precepts, burning incense and chanting sutras, *prima facie* it is unclear how these ritual acts are either sufficient or necessary for realizing emptiness, and embodying the attitudinal state of great compassion whereby the boundaries between the body-mind of self-and-other 'drop off.' According to Dōgen, unless these ceremonial acts, as well as the ritual practice of *zazen*, are performed from a state of non-thinking, they

[126] See David Riggs, "Are Sōtō Precepts for Ethical Guidance or Ceremonial Transformation: Menzan's Attempted Reforms and Contemporary Practices," in *Dōgen and Sōtō Zen*, ed. Steven Heine (NY: Oxford University Press, 2015). Steven Heine, (2015). 188-209.

[127] According to D.C. Lau, rituals, or rites (Ch. *li*), "were a body of rules governing action in every aspect of life and they were the repository of past insights into morality. It is therefore, important that one should, unless there are strong reasons to the contrary, observe them. Though there is no guarantee that observance of the rites necessarily leads, in every case, to behavior that is right, the chances are it will, in fact, do so" (Lau 1979, 20). In Book XII of the *The Analects*, for example, it states: "Yen Yüan asked about benevolence. The Master said, 'To return to the observance of the rites through overcoming the self constitutes benevolence. If for a single day a man could return to the observance of the rites through overcoming himself, then the whole Empire would consider benevolence to be his. However, the practice of benevolence depends on oneself alone, and not on others'" (Lau 1979, 112).

will not give rise to the realization that all beings are Buddha-nature; thus, I follow Steven Heine's lead when he states:

> A crucial implication of Dōgen's teaching is that if meditation becomes mechanical, then it too must be spurned; contrawise, if other practices are performed in a genuinely purposeless way, they should be considered exceptionally valuable techniques fully compatible with just sitting. The key to understanding Dōgen's outlook is that neither zazen nor alternative practices constitute a direct route to awakening conceived as a final destination in a way that is derived from a linear view of temporality. Instead, from the holistic standpoint of the inseparability of practice-realization, each approach to training represents but one of multitudes of ongoing manifestations of the awakened awareness of nonthinking that transpires each and every moment. (Heine 2020, 207-208)

And, not withstanding Heine's position, in his article "The Enlightening Practice of Non-Thinking: Unfolding Dōgen's Fukanzazengi," Bret Davis explains that while it is the case that Dōgen believed that "zazen is the most important practice," his writings on such, "need to be tempered and counterbalanced by attending to the manner in which he does affirm, interpretively adapt, and promote these other disciplines" (Davis 2016, 201). Dōgen's fascicle *Jukai*, "Receiving the Precepts" evidences Davis's point:

> Without receiving the precepts we are never the disciples of the buddhas and never the descendants of the ancestral masters – because they have never seen "departing from excess and guarding against wrong" as "practicing [Za]zen and inquiring into the truth." The words "the precepts are foremost" already are the right-Dharma-eye treasury itself. To realize Buddha and become a patriarch inevitably is to receive and maintain the right-Dharma-eye treasury; therefore, the ancestral masters who receive the authentic transmission of the right-Dharma-eye treasury inevitably receive and maintain the Buddhist precepts. (Dōgen 1994, 228)

Nevertheless, according to Davis, *zazen* is "a touchstone and springboard" for Dōgen's philosophy and practice.

In his book, *Dōgen On Meditation and Thinking: A Reflection On His View of Zen,* Hee-Jin Kim contends that the sole reason supporting Dōgen's staunch defense of *zazen* in *Bendōwa* and *Fukanzazengi* stems, as I noted in Chapter three, from his non-dual perspective of practice and enlightenment. In *Bendōwa*, for example, Dōgen states:

> The thought that practice and experience are not one thing is just the idea of non-Buddhists. In the Buddhist-Dharma practice and experience are completely the same. Practice now is also practice in the state of experience; therefore, a beginner's pursuit of truth is just the whole body

> of the original state of experience. […] Because practice is just experience, the experience is endless; and because experience is practice, the practice has no beginning. (Dōgen 1994, 12)

Herein, Dōgen addresses two interrelated religious-philosophical issues: (1) the doctrine of *hongaku*, the teaching of 'original enlightenment'; and (2) the debate over sudden vs. gradual enlightenment. Beginning with the former, Kim[128], Abe[129], Kasulis[130] and Davis[131] have identified and explained how the doctrine of original enlightenment vexed Dōgen early in his monastic career as a *Tendai* monk at Mt. Hiei. The problem: if all beings are already enlightened, then why must one practice Buddhism? Why must one go through monastic training, perform ceremonial rituals, study and chant sutras, etc.? Consequently, because no one at Mt. Hiei could provide a satisfactory answer to this critical question, Dōgen began his journey along the path of Zen; a path that leads to a nondual soteriology whereby original enlightenment is realized through, and only through, ongoing practice.[132] In regards to the latter issue, sudden vs. gradual, Dōgen is clear to avoid the teleological view of gradualism which is contingent upon the duality between means and ends; and, he is also careful to avoid the antinomian perspective, vis-à-vis committing evil without obstruction (Jpn. *zōaku muge*), that can potentially ensue after having a

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[128] Hee-Jin Kim, *Eihei Dōgen: Mystical Realist* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2004).
[129] Masao Abe, *A Study of Dōgen: His Philosophy and Religion* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992).
[130] Thomas P. Kasulis, *Zen Action/Zen Person* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1981).
[131] Bret Davis "The Enlightening Practice of Non-Thinking: Unfolding Dōgen's Fukuanzazengi." In *Engaging Dōgen's Zen: The Philosophy of Pracrice As Awakening*, edited by Tetsuzen Jason M. Wirth, Shūdō Brian Schroeder, and Kanpū Bret W. Davis (Boston: Wisdom Publication, 2016) 199-224.
[132] According to Jacqueline Stone, original enlightenment in medieval *Tendai* Buddhism was influenced by *Hua-yen* (Jpn. *Kegon*) esoteric teachings, particularly *Shih Mo-ho-yen lun* (Treatise interpreting the Mahāyāna), which is believed to be a commentary composed by Nāgārjuna on the *Awakening of Faith* (Stone 1999). "This treatise relativizes the distinction drawn in the Awakening of Faith between the 'mind as suchness' and the 'mind as arising and perishing' by postulating a third term, the 'nondual Mahāyāna' (pu-erh mo-ho-yen, funi makaen) in which both are subsumed" (Stone 1999, 11). During the Kamakura period, *Tendai* interpretations of this text was shaped by Kūkai's appropriations, whereby original enlightenment is, rather than a potential to realize enlightenment that is inherent within deluded minds, "the ontological basis of the nonduality of beings and the Buddha" (Stone 1999, 11). Thus, the Tendai perspective of original enlightenment in which Dōgen's thinking was entangled maintained that, "it is no longer merely an abstract principle but the actual, true aspect of all things (*ji jissō*) (Stone 1999, 37). And, as Hee-Jin Kim notes, "the doctrine of original enlightenment was accompanied by a cognate doctrine of 'this body itself is Buddha' (*sokushin-jōbutsu*), which was likewise radicalized by Japanese Buddhism. This tenet accepted the immediate enlightenment of the psycho-physical existence with all its particularities, which were not, as Zen Buddhists would say, 'a finger pointing to the moon,' but the moon itself, or to put it differently, not the accommodative manifestations of the Body of Law (*dharmakāya; hosshin*), but the Body of Law itself. This doctrine of esoteric Buddhism, both Shingon and Tendai versions, influenced the ethos of the time. Mundane existence was sanctified, as it was by the doctrine of original enlightenment" (Kim 2004, 23).

sudden experience/insight into the emptiness of all things.[133] Because practice and enlightenment are the same according to Dōgen, his perspective avoids the dualistic trappings of both sudden and gradualist views. Herein, the pivot of Dōgen's Zen, vis-à-vis the non-duality of practice and enlightenment, is *zazen*-only (Jpn. *shikantaza*).

It is from this non-dual relationship between practice and enlightenment, vis-à-vis *zazen*, that we are able to make sense of Dōgen's praxis oriented ethic. As Kim notes:

> The problem of enlightenment cannot be properly understood without considering the problem of morality and ethics. Morality and enlightenment were inseparably related to one another, so much so that one without the other was not authentic so far as Dōgen was concerned. For nirvana was not beyond good and evil as it is usually – indeed, too often – interpreted in the popular parlance, but was rather a mode of existence with a definite moral commitment that was realized in and through the realm of good and evil (and cause and effect as well), and yet was undefiled by them. The secret to this undefiled freedom lay in the method of the total exertion of a single thing (*ippō-gūjin*), which appropriated the traditional Buddhist ideas of emptiness and nonduality,

[133] The Tendai meditation techniques that Dōgen practiced during his early training as monk at Mt. Hiei were likely influenced by the continental *T'ien-T'ai* text *The Method of Concentration and Insight* (Ch. *Ta-ch'eng chih-kuan fa-men*) which is ascribed to Hui-ssu (514-577), the second patriarch of the *T'ien T'ai* school and proponent of the Lotus Sūtra (Chan 1963). Therein it states, "By concentration is meant to know that all dharmas (elements of existence), from the very beginning have no nature of their own. The neither come into nor go out of existence. Because they are caused by illusion and imagination, they exist without real existence. But the existence of existent dharmas is the same as nonexistence. They are only the one mind, whose substance admits no differentiation. Those who hold this view can stop the flow of erroneous thought. This is called concentration" (Chan 1963, 398). Herein, 'concentration' (Skt. *śamatha*; Ch. *chih*) is then accompanied by 'insight' (Skt. *vipaśyanā*; Ch. *kuan*), which according to the text, "is meant that although we know that [things] originally do not come into existence and at present do not go out of existence, nevertheless they were caused to arise out of the mind's nature and hence are not without a worldly function of an unreal and imaginative nature. They are like illusions and dreams which [seem to] exist but really do not. This is therefore called insight….It means to base and concentrate on the one mind in order to practice concentration and insight (Chan 1963, 399). Herein, concentration and insight open a clearing for realizing original enlightenment, or Buddha-nature; "the Pure Mind is realized in substance, the nature which is without duality is harmonized through principle (li, rational nature of things), these and all sentient beings are harmoniously identified to form a body of one single character" (Chan 1963, 404). Indeed, Dōgen's Zen perspective in the *Shōbōgenzō* echoes these ideas, including his characterization of moral values as uncreated (Jpn. *mushō*). That being said, Dōgen, along with other *Tendai* contemporaries (e.g. Shinran) from Mt. Hiei, believed that insight into the emptiness of all dharmas can condition an antinomian attitude of licensed evil. The idea of licensed evil is embedded within "Tendai Original Enlightenment Discourse" (Jpn. *Tendai hongaku ron*), which included ideas such as 'karma is precisely liberation' (Jpn. *gō soku gedatsu*) (Stone 1999). The idea that 'karma is precisely liberation,' "represents a specific formulation of the broader idea that the dharmas, being empty, are mutually encompassing. Thus it can only be grasped on the basis of insight into the nondual nature of reality" (Stone 1999, 219). Thus, according to Hee Jin-Kim, "When one denied any metaphysical hiatus between principle and phenomenon, however, even the profoundest Mahāyāna doctrines became dangerously indistinguishable from crude and irresponsible acceptance of whatever existed in the world, at the sacrifice of spiritual exertions. In fact, a number of dangerous misinterpretations of these doctrines were rampant toward the close of the Heian period and were especially flagrant among worldly minded Buddhist monastics who attempted to rationalize the pursuit of their selfish interests. Furthermore, an exclusive claim of faith, which required no strenuous religious moral exertion, became readily associated with antinomian cynicism inspired by the Age of Degenerate Law" (Kim 2004, 23).

> existentially, practically, and religiously, rather than theoretically […] In brief, spiritual freedom and moral commitment were inseparably intertwined in Zen, as far as Dōgen was concerned. (Kim 2004, 216-217)

Kim's position, which I am sympathetic with, can be set up accordingly:

> P1. If *zazen* practice is the pivot for realizing enlightenment, and enlightenment is nondualistically related with ethics, then *zazen* is the pivot for ethics.
>
> P2. *Zazen* is the pivot for realizing enlightenment.
>
> P3. Enlightenment is nondualistically related with ethics.
>
> C. Therefore *zazen* practice is the pivot for ethics.

To flesh this argument out further, and thereby see if the premises supporting the conclusion are acceptable, we shall turn our attention to Dōgen's philosophy of non-thinking (Ch. *fēi sī liang*; Jpn. *hishiryō*).

§6.3 Phenomenology of Zazen: Thinking of Not-Thinking

The practice of *zazen*, seated meditation, distinguished Dōgen from other leading Buddhist thinkers during the Kamakura period. Without the practice of the "mountain-still state," as Dōgen often characterizes *zazen*, there is no transmission of the 'Right-Dharma-eye treasury.' For example, consider the following passage from *Zazenshin*, "A Needle for Zazen:"

> To say that the dharma of the Buddha has been transmitted from the Western Heavens to the Eastern Earth implies the transmission of the seated Buddha, for it is the essential function [of that dharma]. And where the dharma of the Buddha is not transmitted, neither is seated meditation. What has been inherited by successor after successor [in this transmission] is just this message of seated meditation; one who does not participate in the unique transmission of this message is not a Buddha or a Patriarch. (Dōgen 1988, 197)

Now there is much that can be stated about the phenomenology and philosophy of Dōgen's *zazen* practice, particularly in regards to the body. To give a comprehensive treatment of his reflections will, unfortunately, bring us well beyond the scope of this dissertation. Thus we shall focus our attention upon *zazen* as a normative practice.

In both *Zazenshin* and *Zazengi, "*Standard Methods of Zazen," as well as the *Fukanzazengi*, Dōgen's characterization of *zazen* is presented through the following encounter dialogue.

> Once, when the Great Master Hung-tao of Yüeh shan was sitting [in meditation], a monk asked him: "What are you thinking, [sitting there] so fixedly?"
>
> The Master answered, "I am thinking of not thinking."
>
> The monk asked, "How do you think of not thinking?"
>
> The master answered, "Nonthinking." (Dōgen 1988, 188-189)

What does the master mean by "non-thinking," and how is it related with the other modes of thinking (Ch. *sī liang*; Jpn. *shiryō*) and not thinking (Ch. *bù sī liang*; Jpn. *fu-shiryō*)? To begin unpacking this question, let us proceed by looking at Dōgen's interpretation of this encounter dialogue:

> The master answered, "Nonthinking." Although the employment of nonthinking is crystal clear, when we think of not thinking, we always use nonthinking. There is someone in nonthinking, and this someone maintains us. Although it is we who are [sitting] fixedly, [our sitting] is not merely thinking: it presents itself as [sitting] fixedly. Although [sitting] fixedly is [sitting] fixedly, how could it think of [sitting] fixedly. Therefore, sitting fixedly is not the measure of the Buddha, not the measure of awakening, not the measure of comprehension. (Dōgen 1988, 189)

For starters, according to our everyday conventional view-point, 'thinking' is discriminative and dualistic. As Kim explains:

> In his writings, Dōgen employs a number of notions that broadly denote discriminative thinking – *nenryo, nenkaku, ryochi, ryochi nenkaku, chikaku, fumbetsu, shiyui, shiryō*, and so on, although they vary in their connotations and nuances. The common thread running through them is activities of consciousness and the intellect that "divide" and "split" the seamless reality, in order to designate negative significations. (Kim 2007, 83)

Davis echoes Kim's point when he explains that *shiryō*, "connotes a kind of discriminative thinking that calculates and evaluates" (Davis 2016, 216). For Dōgen, thinking is how we engage the world from a dualistic perspective; and, in the context of normative judgments our thinking is crooked, *hen'i*. That being said, the dualistic nature of thinking does not entail the conclusion that the goal of Zen practice is to transcend our cognitive deliberations about life, death and authentic engagement with the world. No doubt, discriminative thinking can condition a tendency to reify things, concepts and beliefs as if they had a fixed essence; however, this does not entail that thinking is dispensable. As Kim explains:

> To Dōgen's credit, delusion and enlightenment alike are rooted in discriminative thinking. Like it or not, you are bound to discriminate and differentiate things, events, and relations, in a myriad of different ways. The activities of discrimination may be self-centered, discriminatory, and restrictive. Yet, discriminative activities, once freed of substantialist, egocentric obsessions, can function compassionately and creatively. (Kim 2007, 84-85)

Based upon Kim's interpretation of thinking, we can draw the conclusion that, for Dōgen, dualisms between 'yours and mine', 'now" and then', 'good and bad' etc. are not, from an uncritical perspective, conceived of as dualisms at all. Rather, they are uncritically accepted to be how things exist. Yet, upon critical analysis, one can come to realize, via *zazen*, that such dualisms only exist because they are empty and nondual.

Based upon this interpretation of thinking, how are we to understand Dōgen's use of 'not-thinking' (Ch. *bù sī liang*; Jpn. *fushiryō*)? If distinct from thinking, then not-thinking seems to create another dualism which paradoxically contradicts the original intention to avoid duality. Thomas Kasulis helps clarify the distinction between thinking and not thinking through a Western phenomenological lens. In his chapter "Phenomenology of Zazen," from *Zen Action/Zen Person*, he states that thinking has the noetic attitude of either affirming or negating; it is, in other words, positional, and the noematic content are conceptual objects. Similar to thinking, 'not thinking,' is also positional, yet only in a negative sense. Not thinking "in its 'absolute sense' (that is, in its technical usage here) is simply the negation or denial of "*shiryō*" (Kasulis 1981, 72). Herein, the noematic content of not thinking is 'thinking' itself, which is objectified, and thus to be negated. According to Kasulis, "this form of denial is problematic. From what standpoint, we might ask, can we speak of the denial of thought? Is not that denial itself a thought?" (Kasulis 1981, 73). Both Hung-tao and Dōgen are aware of this paradox. Rather than interpreting Hung-tao's 'not-thinking' as a dualistic alternative to that of 'thinking,' there is a more nuanced logic at play here. The fact that thinking is dualistic does not entail that insight and realization, via *zazen*, is going to be attained by abandoning 'thinking' through some kind of non-dualistic 'not-thinking.' Yakusan's 'not-thinking' is saying just this. 'Not-thinking' is not some alternative to 'thinking,' but rather, another mode of thinking that reifies.

Kim echoes Kasulis' insight as well. As he notes in his thoroughgoing treatment of thinking and not-thinking, the latter is not primordial, transcendent or quietist; "Not-thinking neither precedes nor succeeds, nor is outside, nor behind thinking" (Kim 2007, 88-89). As Kim interprets Dōgen's use of not-thinking in light of the Mahāyāna philosophy of emptiness, an interpretation that I share, he also explains how Dōgen makes use of not-thinking as a way of 'negotiating' his practice without reifying such as a foundation for thinking and/or mind.

> For Dōgen's part, he neither psychologizes nor metaphysicizes not-thinking, but instead, treats it soteriologically in order for it to serve as a radical critique of thinking and as a window to new horizons of thinking. In short, not-thinking is neither the psychological nor the metaphysical ground of thinking, but is simply a focus – a conceptual construct. That said, not only are those functions of not-thinking inherent in thinking itself (according to the pan-Buddhist logic we are now familiar with) but are intimate with thinking (according to Dōgen's logic of intimacy). Intimacy does not signify a fusion of not-thinking and thinking, as in, say, the mystical "coincidence of opposites," nor does it mean a conglutination of them. Differences between them are alive, not obliterated, and still, the two soteric foci are intimate in their dialogical communion. Intimacy is a special relationship between the two foci that is practiced despite and/or because of their differences and tensions. (Kim 2007, 89)

Based upon this examination we now find ourselves facing the following question: how does one think of not-thinking if it is not a state of mental blankness? The answer, as documented in *Zazenshin*, is 'non-thinking' (Ch. *fēi sī liang*; Jpn. *hishiryō*).

Non-thinking, in Dōgen's Zen, is the pivot of his practice of *zazen* and his metaethical perspective. Indeed, as we shall see, non-thinking is how the conceptual threads we have investigated in the fascicle *Shoaku-Makusa* are woven together; it is the practice of non-thinking that one realizes: (1) that all values are 'uncreated' (Jpn. *mushō*); (2) that what determines the 'rightness' or 'wrongness' of actions is, contrary to both consequentialism and deontology, dependent upon whether one engages and interacts with others via non-action (Ch. *wu-wei*) or not-committing (Jpn. *makusa*), vis-à-vis 'dropping-off body and mind' (Jpn. *shinjin datsuraku*); and (3) that normative expressions are anti-cognitive modes

of 'nonspeaking' (Jpn. *hiogen*)[134] whereby value judgments are revealed and concealed. However, before bringing these threads together, a few points should be noted about non-thinking as the 'thinking of not-thinking.'

For starters, returning to Kasulis' phenomenological interpretation of 'thinking' and 'not thinking,' Kasulis characterizes 'non-thinking,' or 'without thinking' as non-positional, vis-à-vis noetic attitude. In other words, non-thinking neither affirms nor negates thinking itself. "Without thinking is distinct from thinking and not-thinking precisely in its assuming no intentional attitude whatsoever: it neither affirms nor denies, accepts nor rejects, believes nor disbelieves. In fact, it does not objectify either implicitly or explicitly" (Kasulis 1981, 74-74). Based upon these formalized distinctions between thinking, not-thinking and non-thinking/without thinking, Kasulis contends that 'without thinking' is a more basic mode of consciousness than the former positional modes.

> In this respect, the noetic content (or act aspect) of without-thinking is completely different from that of thinking or not thinking. Even though without-thinking circumvents all objectification, it is nonetheless a mode of consciousness, and through reflection on a without-thinking act, one may isolate aspects of its formal contents. The point, though, is that at the time of without-thinking's actual occurrence, those contents were neither affirmed nor negated – they were merely an unobjectified presence without any conscious or unconscious attitude directed toward them. In short, it is non-conceptual or prereflective mode of consciousness. (Kasulis 1981, 75)

In a similar philosophical light as Kasulis, Davis states:

> In thinking of not-thinking, we are aiming our intentional mind at its own ground, at nonthinking, and thus turning it into a contentless object of thought, into a kind of relative or privative nothingness. But nonthinking is in truth an "absolute nothingness" in the sense of an essentially indeterminate field of nondual awareness, a field which underlies or encompasses the determination of thinking, not-thinking and thinking of not-thinking. (Davis 2016, 218-219)

I contend that this mode of thinking as non-thinking best characterizes the phenomenology of *zazen* as a normative practice.

[134] Herein, I am following Steven Heine's use of the term nonspeaking. According to Heine, "This notion refers to the capacity to disclose the Dharma in a way that is unlimited by the usual distinction between speech and verbosity or silence and reticence, since both modes of communication are ultimately avenues for conveying genuine awareness" (Heine 2020, 146).

Non-thinking as a normative practice can be first understood in light of 'right thinking.' Hee-Jin Kim identifies non-thinking with 'right-thinking' (Jpn. s*hoshiryō*) which is, "one of the categories in the eightfold right path (*hasshōdō*) that leads to the cessation of suffering and the attainment of *nirvāṇa*" (Kim 2007, 91). This hermeneutical move is indeed significant for:

> It implies that right thought is not only to be practiced simultaneously in conjunction with the seven other categories of the path (i.e., right understanding, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration), but also is the kernel of them all, that is of the Buddhist path to liberation. This is quite a novel reinterpretation of the eightfold path as the early Buddhist teaching of praxis. (Needless to say, that thinking in this context involves not only cognitive qualities, such as conceptualization, reflection, deliberation and criticism, but also affective ones, such as feeling, emotion volition and desire). Furthermore, in the context of the three divisions of the eightfold path – morality, meditation and wisdom (*kai-jō-e*) – Dōgen singles out right thought from the division of wisdom. He takes it to be the essence of meditation, as if he were overriding the conventional arrangement of right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration under the division of meditation. (Kim 2007, 91-92)

As Kim notes, the tripartite division of the Buddhist eightfold path – morality, meditation and wisdom – are, according to Dōgen, unified through right-thinking as non-thinking, which is realized through *zazen*. I am sympathetic with this interpretation as it is well supported by Dōgen's reflections on the eight-fold path in fascicle *Sanjushichi-Bon-Bodai-Bunpo,* "The Thirty Seven Elements of Bodhi." When reflecting upon right thinking, we find an all too familiar encounter dialogue on thinking and not thinking in the following passage:

> When [we] establish this thinking, the buddhas of the ten directions all appear. So the manifestation of the ten directions and the manifestation of buddhas, are just the time of the establishment of this concrete thinking. When we establish this concrete thinking we are beyond self and transcending the external world; at the same time, in the very moment of the present, on thinking concrete facts we go straight to Vārānasi. The place where thinking exists is Vārānasi. An eternal Buddha says "I am thinking the concrete state of not thinking." How can the state of not thinking be thought? "It is different from thinking." This is right consideration, right thinking. To break a zafu is right thinking. (Dōgen 1994, 15)

Similarly, right thinking, as Davis explains, "is rooted in the nonthinking of zazen" (Davis 2016, 220). And, as a component of the eight-fold path, I contend, and plan to show, that non-thinking is the central pillar of Dōgen's metaethical perspective. Phenomenologically, non-thinking is how practitioners of

Dōgen's Zen are able to realize and embody the justification of their moral beliefs and normative judgments.

§6.4 'Not-Doing' Metaethics as A Practice of Non-Thinking

Having reviewed the phenomenology of thinking in the context of practicing *zazen*, we can now begin an examination of Dōgen's way-seeking metaethic of non-thinking. In doing so, we will be able to clarify Dōgen's normative proclamation of 'not committing' (Jpn. *makusa*), as well as his anti-cognitivist practice of nonspeaking, in light of *zazen*.

In his treatment of *Shoaku-Makusa*, Kasulis contends that "Dōgen's project of affirming traditional moral values and ideals while denying essentialist distinctions between good and evil is built upon his phenomenology of *zazen"* (Kasulis 1981, 94). From this 'empty-foundation,' we discover the relationship between Dōgen's non-thinking/without-thinking and 'not-doing/without-committing. In the context of practicing *zazen*, when a practitioner has realization, the moral imperative of *shoaku-makusa* "is no longer an imperative; it is now a description of without thinking" (Kasulis 1981, 95). William Bodiford echoes this metaethical point in the introduction to his translation of *Shoaku-Makusa*:

> It is as if 'Thou shalt not kill' is taken first as a moral imperative and by living one's life accordingly, one is transformed so that 'thou shalt not kill' becomes no longer an imperative, but a descriptive statement about what one will not do because of what one has become. At that point the distinction between good and evil as principles disappears because there is no longer a need for the distinction" (Bodiford 2011, 156)

As I understand Kasulis and Bodiford, Dōgen's use of *makusa* as a descriptive statement, rather than a performative command, is his way of incorporating the Confucian[135] and Daoist[136] philosophies of 'non-action' (Ch. *wu-wei*) into his metaethical perspective of *zazen* as a normative practice.

Of the East-Asian Buddhist traditions, part of what makes *Chan*/Zen unique is its syncretism of Buddhist, Confucian and Daoist philosophies and perspectives;[137] in regards to Dōgen's Zen, religious syncretism also includes Japan's native religious tradition of Shinto as well.[138] Within both Confucianism and Daoism, the philosophy of non-action (Ch. *wu-wei*), as I noted in Chapter three, is pivotal. For

[135] In Confucianism, non-action (Ch. *wu-wei*) is normatively tide to the philosophy of 'the rectification of names (Ch. *Zhèngmíng*). This philosophy, according to Chung-ying Cheng, "may be said to embody in a nutshell all main ideas of the Confucian humanistic ideal of achieving good government on the basis of individual moral-self-cultivation and social ethical edification. Confucius hoped that a ruler would set a moral personal example for people to emulate so that the ruler would sit facing the south like the pole star and the people would behave themselves in good order. This is a kind of 'doing nothing' (*wu-wei*) but with the ruler as an 'unmoved mover,' not the *tao*, which in any case is not confined to a particular person nor simply unmoved but instead spontaneously self-moving. To rectify names combines both the implicit appeal to 'do nothing' and the explicit appeal to 'do something' for creating and maintaining good government" (Cheng 1991, 43).

[136] In Daoism, the philosophy of non-action (Ch. *wu-wei*) reflects a natural mode of comportment whereby one either: (1) allows 'nature' or the 'Way' (Ch. *Dao*) to unfold without interference; or (2) acts naturally and effortlessly in accordance with the 'nature' or the Way.' As Wing-Tsit Chan explains, "Whereas in other schools Tao means a system of moral truth, in this school it is the One, which is natural, eternal, spontaneous, nameless, and indescribable. It is at once the beginning of all things and the way in which all things pursue their course. When this Tao is possessed by individual things, it becomes its character or virtue (*te*). The ideal life for the individual, the ideal order for society, and the ideal type of government are all based on it and guided by it. As the way of life, it denotes simplicity, spontaneity, tranquility, weakness, and most of all, non-action (*wu-wei*). By the latter is not meant literally 'inactivity' but rather 'taking no action that is contrary to Nature'–in other words, letting Nature take its own course" (Chan 1963, 136).

[137] In regards to Confucianism, according to D.T. Suzuki, "The difference between Confucian scholars and Zen masters was that the Confucians based their philosophy on the native system, while the Zen Buddhists adhered to their own although they adopted the Confucian vocabulary. […] It me be said that the difference between the two classes of mind lay in the placing of emphasis. The Zen monks interpreted the Confucian texts in the Indian fashion, so to speak–that is, more or less idealistically–and they were not averse to commenting on Buddhist literature from the Confucian point of view" (Suzuki 1959, 43). And, in regards to Daoism, according to Heinrich Dumoulin, "The wisdom teachings of Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu–or 'philosophical Taoism' as it is called in the European literature in order to distinguish it from 'popular Taoism'–provided one of the best bridges of understanding between Chinese thought and Buddhism" (Dumoulin 1988, 65).

[138] Japanese Buddhism in general, Zen in particular, is a syncretism of: (1) Confucianism; (2) Buddhism; and (3) Shinto. "One remarkable fact deserving notice," according to Suzuki, "is that Shintoism, which is regarded as the official embodiment the national spirit of Japan, did not assert itself as doctrinally independent of either Confucianism or Buddhism" (Suzuki 1959, 57). In fact, as Jacqueline Stone explains, the syncretism between Buddhism and Shinto was tightly tied to the doctrine of original enlightenment. For example, "In the myths related in the eighth century imperially commissioned chronicles Kojiki (Record of ancient matters) and Nihon Shoki (Chronicles of Japan), when the Sun Goddess hid herself in the rock cave, all was in darkness. The opening of the rock cave, which restored light to the world, is here likened to the revelation of original enlightenment" (Stone 1999, 43).

example, in *The Analects*, the ideal Confucian ruler is one who, in light of comporting oneself with the Dao, the 'Way,' and thereby receiving the mandate of heaven, rules by doing nothing; "The Master said, 'The rule of virtue can be compared to the Pole Star which commands the homage of the multitude of stars without leaving its place" (Lau 1979, 63). And in Daoist literature, specifically the works of Zhuangzi (Chuang Tzu), we discover that the ideal image of the sage is one who realizes 'non-action' as a normative practice, vis-à-vis embodying the Dao. For example, consider the following passage from the essay "Preserving and Accepting:"

> Merely situate yourself in nonaction,
> And things will evolve of themselves.
>
> Slough off your bodily form
> Dim your intelligence
> Forget all relationships and things;
> Join in the great commonality of boundlessness. (Chuang Tzu 1994, 99)

To begin unpacking this passage in order to see how it helps us make sense of Dōgen's perspective of not-doing/without-committing, there are some preliminary points that we should note about the nature of 'negative actions' proper. Herein, Gilbert Ryle's "Negative Actions," from *On Thinking* (1979) will be helpful.

The first question we must ask is whether a particular mode of behavior can be regarded as a negative act, and if so, in what ways? For example, positive actions are actions that an agent voluntarily intends in order to achieve some positive or negative end. Simultaneously, positive actions always involve not doing something else. If I am weeding the garden, then I am not riding a bicycle, or reading a book, or drinking coffee with a friend, which are certainly activities that I could be doing. Moreover, if we characterize negative actions as 'actions', "which consist in the agent's intentional non-performance of some specifiable actions," then consequently, one will find themselves simply doing something else (Ryle 1979, 105). As Ryle notes, what is confusing about 'negative actions' is, "nothing more than an

application of a familiar point about negation in general. […] The negativity title or description of a negative 'action' specifies only that one particular thing that an agent is not doing […] it is non-committal about what else in particular he is doing" (Ryle 1979,108). Thus, Ryle concludes that what we think of as 'negative actions,' such as abstaining from eating meat or procrastinating, should not be thought of as actions at all, but instead, as actualities. 'Negative actions,' as Ryle states, "seem not to qualify as actions proper, for the reason that the full story of a positive action would report it with its full complement of inter alia chronological, behavioral, technical, circumstantial details, while the full story of a negative 'action' would be specific only about the particular thing that the agent did not do" (Ryle 1979, 108). Accordingly, since we understand, for example, what a 'non-smoking' sign means, and so, ipso facto, understand the conditions that support believing whether or not the 'sign' is currently being respected, it thus follows that what we conventionally characterize as a non-action, in this case 'not smoking,' is, as Ryle contends, an actuality. Based upon this line of reasoning, how should we interpret the Daoist/Zen philosophy of non-action (Ch. *wu-wei*)?

If we interpret non-action as an actuality, vis-à-vis non-duality of subject-object/agent-action, then I think Ryle's analytic points are helpful. We ought not to think of non-action as a particular action that is distinct from other actions; rather, non-action is the actualization/realization of the dropping-off of body and mind (Jpn. *shinjin datsuraku*) which is not a specific act unto itself. Dropping off body and mind, and the embodiment of non-action, is to be realized when one is walking, sitting working and reclining; in Zen, non-action is to be actualized and realized through the ritual performance of self-overcoming, vis-à-vis all of our daily actions.[139] As a mode of embodiment, non-action is effortless flow and play. As an effortless flow, whereby our projects and daily tasks become opportunities for play, non-action is realized when there is no longer a duality separating subject and object, or agent and action. As

[139] The philosophy of non-action (Ch. *wu-wei*) is presented in *The Record of Lin-Chi*. For example, *Lin-chi* (Jpn. *Rinzai*) states, "Followers of the Way, the Dharma of buddhas calls for no special undertakings. Just act ordinary, without trying to do anything particular. Move your bowels, piss, get dressed, eat your rice, and if you get tired, then lie down. Fools laugh at me, but wise men will know what I mean" (Foster and Shoemaker 1996, 108).

Burton Watson states in his introduction to the Chuang Tzu, "In such a state, all human actions become as spontaneous and mindless as those of the natural world. Man becomes one with nature […] and merges himself with the Tao, or the Way, the underlying unity that embraces man, Nature, and all that is in the universe" (Watson 1964, 6).

We will be saying more about flow and play in Chapter seven. For right now, returning to the passage cited above from "Preserving and Accepting," we can begin making sense of Dōgen's 'not doing' or 'not committing.' In the first two lines – "Merely situate yourself in nonaction, and things will evolve of themselves" (Mair 1994, 99) – nonaction is the prescribed mode of action by which one is to comport their lives. Contrary to not doing anything at all, nonaction refers to a mode of being whereby subject/object duality dissolves, thereby opening up a nondual horizon whereby our embodied self can spontaneously act with grace and nimbleness. Similar to a dancer who has perfected their steps, or a musician who has mastered a good many scales and chords, the Daoist sage or the Zen master is able to act freely without thinking. The relationship between 'not doing' and 'without thinking' is noted in the remaining lines of the aforementioned verse whereby we are to "slough off bodily form." Herein, the similarities between the use of this Daoist phrase and Dōgen's *genjō* perspective in general, his philosophy and practice of *zazen* in particular, are striking. 'Dropping off body and mind,' is a phrase Dōgen uses throughout the *Shōbōgenzō,* including *Genjō Kōan*, *Fukanzazengi*, and *Shoaku-Makusa*. In the context of *zazen*, Dōgen states, "Therefore we should cease the intellectual work of studying sayings and chasing words. We should learn the backward step of turning the light and reflecting. Body and mind will naturally fall away, and the original features will manifest themselves before us" (Dōgen 1994, 280). Or again, in the context of ethics, vis-à-vis *mushō*[140] and the karma of "not committing," Dōgen states:

> Cause-and-effect itself, at times, makes us practice. The state in which the original features of this cause-and-effect have already become conspicuous is not committing, it is [the state] without

[140] Nishijima translates *mushō* as "non-appearance."

> appearance, it is [the state] without constancy, it is not being unclear, and it is not falling down – because it is the state in which [body and mind] have fallen away. (Dōgen 1994, 101).

We will say more about Dōgen's use of this ancient Daoist phrase below in the next section of this chapter as it is arguably the pivot of Dōgen's *zazen* and the ethical practice of non-thinking, which is what distinguishes Dōgen's ethics from ethical theories and metaethical positions in Western philosophy. As Kasulis notes, "Western ethics has generally developed a thinking or not thinking approach to morality;" Dōgen's ethics, however, which dynamically pivots from "without thinking," emphasizes the "prereflective aspects of experience" (Kasulis 1981, 98). What we can take away from this comparative examination is that by transforming the imperative *shoaku-makusa* into a descriptive statement, as Kasulis and Bodiford suggest, we are able to discover that Dōgen is breathing new life (i.e. expanding our understanding) into this ancient Daoist ethical perspective of *wu-wei*, nonaction. More specifically, and in keeping with Zen's syncretic legacy, Dōgen is inviting us to rethink Buddhist moral prescriptions from a non-dual perspective whereby the separation of subject and object has "fallen away" and the moral distinction between agents and actions dissolves, thus allowing for "the original features to manifest" (Dōgen 1994, 208). In short, non-action is how one normatively comports oneself upon having realized Buddha-nature via dropping off body-and-mind. To flesh this out further, let's turn our attention to Dōgen's moral reflections on the cultivation of 'Bodhi-mind' (Jpn. *bodaishin*) and the determination to realize complete enlightenment.

§6.5 Anti-Cognitivism: Bodhi-Thinking as Ethical Non-Thinking

In his fascicle *Shinjin-Gakudo*, "Learning the Truth With Body and Mind," Dōgen notes the relationship between non-thinking, as the establishment of 'Bodhi-mind' (Jpn. *bodaishin*) and ethics.

> This is the establishment of the Bodhi-mind, it is the naked mind moment by moment, it is the mind of the eternal buddhas, it is the normal mind, and it is the triple world as one mind. There is learning the truth through casting aside these kinds of mind, and there is learning the truth through taking them up. In such instances, the truth is learned through thinking, and the truth is learned through not thinking. [...] To scale the city walls and go into the mountains is to leave one mind and enter another. That the mountains are being entered is "Thinking the concrete state of not thinking." "That the world is being abandoned is "Non-thinking." To be amassing this state as an Eye is a matter of two or three bushels. (Dōgen 1994, 248-249)

There are several points to note so to get clear on this passage. First, Dōgen explicitly claims that the establishment of 'Bodhi-mind' is made real by way of thinking of not thinking. Herein, our awareness, thoughts and feelings are dynamically intimate within each moment of our practice (i.e. "the naked mind moment by moment"). The second point to note is that Dōgen is careful not to carve out any metaphysical distinctions between "non-thinking," (Jpn. *hishiryō*) and "not thinking" (Jpn. *fushiryō*). As he poetically expresses, thinking about not thinking is itself entering the mountains, while non-thinking is the world being left behind and abandoned. The mountains being entered and the world being left behind are not two separate actions; entering into a monastic community is itself leaving the world behind. Similarly, non-thinking is not a different mode of thought or state of consciousness separate from the act of thinking about not thinking; they are, rather, co-dependent and empty. However, though they are empty, they are realized in the everyday (i.e. conventional) world of causality and impermanence.

By drawing the conceptual bridge between non-thinking and 'Bodhi-mind' (Jpn. *bodaishin*) Dōgen is able to highlight the relationship between 'Bodhi-mind' and ethics.

> Establishment of the Bodhi-mind is beyond existence and beyond non-existence; it is beyond good, beyond bad, and beyond indifference; it does not originate from a reward state, and it is not always impossible for gods and sentient beings to realize. It is simply that, in time with time, we establish the Bodhi-mind. Because [the establishment] is not concerned with circumstances, in the very moment of establishment of the Bodhi-mind, the whole dharma world establishes the Bodhi-mind. (Dōgen 1994, 251-252)

There are several important points worth noting here. The first pertains to karma. According to Dōgen, our karma, in regards to the conditions and circumstances we now find ourselves in, does not, as I noted in the previous chapter, obstruct realization. Karmic conditions and circumstances, because they are empty, do not inherently obstruct whether we realize the Buddha-dharma or not. As Dōgen subsequently states in the same fascicle, "Even in states such as those of hell, hungry ghosts, animals, *asuras,* we establish the Bodhi-mind" (Dōgen 1994, 252). The establishment of the 'Bodhi-mind' is itself the very moment of practicing *zazen;* the very moment of thinking of not thinking via non-thinking. That being said, it is important to note that for Dōgen, the establishment of 'Bodhi-mind' can influence our karma,

and perhaps attune our mode-of-being within the six-fold world of gods, humans, hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals and *asuras*: "[The establishment] seems to turn circumstances around, but circumstances are not aware of it" (Dōgen 1994, 252). Thus, 'Bodhi-mind' (Jpn. *bodaishin*), vis-à-vis non-thinking, is not, notwithstanding the denial of objective moral values, transcendent to the moral life per se.

Pivoting from the aforementioned treatment of karma, the second point worth noting concerns the relationship between 'Bodhi-mind'and normative values. As Dōgen explains in the above passage, "The establishment of the Bodhi-mind is beyond existence and beyond non-existence; it is beyond good, beyond bad, and beyond indifference" (Dōgen 1994, 252). While one might question how there could be a relationship between 'Bodhi-mind' and ethics if the cultivation of the "enlightened mind" is beyond good, bad and indifference, when we consider Dōgen's reflections on karma, the relationship seems reasonably consistent. According to Dōgen, since karmic circumstances have no bearing upon establishing 'Bodhi-mind' it would be a contradiction to state that the establishment of such – 'bodhi-mind' – is contingent upon the objective existence of good, bad, and indifference. Since the establishment of 'bodhi-mind' via non-thinking, is empty – 'beyond existence and non-existence' – it is through non-thinking that the nature of morality is realized as uncreated (Jpn. *mushō*) and the practice of not-doing/without-doing (Jpn. *makusa*) is embodied. In keeping with Van der Braak's interpretation of Dōgen, the metaethical commitments of 'uncreated' values and the action guiding directive of non-action/without-committing do not entail that Zen practice is completely 'beyond good and evil.' Thus, as Kim explains, Dōgen's normative perspective, "is neither heteronomous 'Thou shalt not' nor the autonomous 'I ought not' but is non-contrivance. Morality, if it is to be authentic, should and can arise spontaneously from enlightenment. […] When morality becomes effortless, purposeless, and playful, it becomes a nonmoral morality that is the culmination of Zen practice of the Way in which morality, art, and play merge together" (Kim 2004, 228). In other words, Dogen's normative perspective, vis-à-vis nonduality of practice and original enlightenment (Jpn. *hongaku*), does not permit one to commit evil actions (i.e. licensed evil), but rather opens up a new vantage point for clarifying good and evil; instead of

thinking about good and evil from the standpoints of consequentialism or deontology, Dōgen's metaethical standpoint directs us to penetrate good and evil via non-thinking.

Dōgen's metaethical standpoint of anti-realism vis-à-vis non-thinking can be further clarified through the *Shōbōgenzō* fascicle *Sanjushichi-Bon-Bodaui-Bunpo*, "Thirty Seven Elements of Bodhi." Consider the following passage whereby Dōgen employs the tools of critical thinking in order to challenge the realist view that a 'wrong' could exist, mind-independently, at some future time, which in turn would allow for us to prevent such from happening.

> What is called bad does not always have established forms and grades; the term has been established land by land and sphere by sphere. Nevertheless, prevention of that which has not yet occurred is called the Buddha-Dharma, and we have received its authentic transmission. […] Now, let us inquire, at the time when bad has not occurred, where is it? To say that it will exist in the future is to be forever a non-Buddhist of nihilism. To say that the future becomes the present is not an insistence of the Buddha-Dharma: the three times would have to be confused. If the three times were confused, all dharmas would be confused. If all dharmas were confused, real form would be confused. If real form were confused, buddhas alone, together with buddhas, would be confused. For this reason we do not say that the future will, in future, become the present. (Dōgen 1994, 6)

In this passage, Dōgen proceeds by noting what he thinks is a metaethical given: values are contextually relative.[141] From one land to the next on this heavenly sphere, to the lands of other heavenly spheres, badness, as well as goodness and indifference, have different "forms and grades." As I interpret Dōgen's relativism, it is not the case that there are different moral truths that are discovered by different cultures or individual subjects; instead, the relativity of values simply entails that values are always mind-dependent, thus situated in relation to circumstances that arise co-dependently. In keeping with Guilbault's 'conventionalism' and Davis' 'contextualism', as I interpret Dōgen, relativism does not entail amorality, but rather demands nuanced thinking on our part as critical thinkers. Thus, by drawing a clear metaethical line in the 'Zen sand', Dōgen employs a Nāgārjunian line of Middle-Way reasoning in order

[141] Davis' contextual relativism is not only evidenced here, but in the fascicle *Kenbutsu*, "Meeting Buddha;" therein Dōgen states, "When we act, we act following circumstances" (Dōgen 1994, 195). By emphasising circumstances, rather than principles or consequentialist values, Dōgen's conception of moral actions is situational, contextual and relative.

to critically evaluate the concept of bad, vis-à-vis time. Embedded in his analysis is the following problem: if badness really exists, then where does it exist when it has not occurred? To say that it does not exist now, but that it will in the future, is unacceptable from Dōgen's position of anti-realism, mainly because moral realism entails the existence of permanent self-natures (Skt. *svabhāva*) that ontologically define things and qualities like badness; thus if it does not exist now, then how can we ever imagine it coming into being in the future (i.e. coming into being implies impermanence, and thereby contradicts moral realism). On the other hand, Dōgen notes that if we say that moral qualities such as badness exist in the present and that the future becomes the present, then we are in even murkier philosophical waters for we are now begging the following question: at what time does the future become the present? It does not make sense that the future becomes the present in the past simply because, in regards to badness, there would be no reason to try and prevent bad from coming into existence in the future since its existence is in the past. Neither can we say that the future becomes the present in the 'present' for then we would be committed to the view that the wrongs that have not occurred are occurring right now, in the present moment. Finally, we cannot say that the future becomes the present in the future for the simple reason that it is absurd.

Dōgen's treatment of 'preventing bad that has not occurred', which no doubt echoes Nāgārjuna's style of *reductio ad absurdum* reasoning, goes further into the metaphysics of time, as well as into epistemological questions regarding sense perception and empirical observation (i.e. naturalism) in a way that creatively advances his metaethical standpoint of anti-realism.

> Let us inquire further: what thing does "bad that has not yet occurred" describe? Who has known or seen it? For it to be known and seen, there must be a time of its non-occurrence and a time of something other than its non-occurrence. In that case, it could not be called something that had not yet occurred. It would have to be called something that has already vanished. Without studying under non-Buddhists or śrāvakas and others of the small vehicle, we should learn in practice the prevention of bad that has not yet occurred. All the bad in the Universe is called "bad that has not yet occurred," and it is bad that does not appear. Non-appearance means yesterday preaching and established rule, today preaching an exception to the rule. (Dōgen 1994, 6)

His first question highlights a skeptical point: if bad that has not occurred exists, then "badness" would have to exist in the present moment; however, it does not make sense to speak of a future non-existing thing actually existing in the present moment. His second question is framed in light of traditional Buddhist theories of knowledge: if bad that has not yet occurred 'really exists,' then not only must it refer to something, we must clarify how we know it exists. Either we know it through sense perception or not. If by way of sense perception, then we have the untenable consequence of perceiving a qualitative 'thing' such as badness prior to its actually occurring. If we do not know through sense perception, then our knowledge must either be grounded by some inference or intuition. However, the latter, intuition, can be dismissed simply because intuition is not part of early Buddhist theories of knowledge. Nor can the former, inference, be affirmed as a live-option since instances of valid inference are always based upon something that has occurred and has been seen. Since what happens in the future is of a class of things and events that have not occurred, there is no experience of such that would allow for us to infer and thereby prevent such things as badness from occurring.

Critics of Dōgen might argue that events from the past, and that which occurs in the present allows for us to set a general precedent to thereby legalistically infer the badness of future occurrences. As evidenced in the passage, Dōgen is aware of this realist perspective, for it would entail the following: "yesterday preaching and established rule, today preaching the same rule, as well as tomorrow." However, as Dōgen states at the end of the passage with a 'Humean' twist, the truths of rule preaching yesterday need not hold true for tomorrow; "yesterday preaching and established rule, today preaching an exception to the rule" (Dōgen 1994, 6). While Dōgen does not deny the effectiveness of inference, he does not think we should conclude that moral beliefs once accepted in the past will continue to be accepted in the future by the same individual, *sangha* or secular society. As Dōgen states, badness, goodness and indifference are not only *mushō*, uncreated, but 'non-appearance' (Jpn. *fushō*) as well. The tripartite division of good, bad and indifference does not exist outside of the present moment; and,

because the present moment does not have any temporal duration, good, bad and indifference are simultaneously concealed and revealed as non-appearance.

In light of these metaethical reflections, Kim's characterization of the ethical spirit of Dōgen's Zen as non-dogmatic and non-conformist seems accurate (Kim 2007, 93). To characterize Dōgen's ethics as non-dogmatic and nonconformist precludes any characterization of Dōgen as a moral objectivist who is committed to the universal status of moral values and principles. This contention is supported by additional characterizations advanced by Kim, including "open-ended" and "dynamic" (Kim 2007, 93). To characterize Dōgen as open-ended, Kim seems to imply that there is no fixed set of values, principles, precepts or moral truths that exist before or after any moral "situation." Herein, Kim seems to be echoing the undetermination thesis in philosophy of science, which states that for "any theory that makes reference to posited unobservable features of the world in its explanatory apparatus will always encounter rival theories incompatible with the original theory but equally compatible with all possible observational data that might be taken as confirmatory of the original theory" (Sklar 1999, 702). To help flesh out the meaning of Kim's use of open-endedness, we shall appeal to the interpretative lens of moderate moral skepticism.

Dōgen's moderate moral skepticism is best understood in light of his overall skeptical outlook. In the fascicle *Kuge*, "Flowers in Space," we are presented with some of Dōgen's finest poetic prose concerning the subject matter of truth, skepticism and our knowledge of the external world. In Zen, 'flowers in space' is a metaphor for the illusory nature of phenomena and the external world. Regardless of whether one is a Buddha or not, according to Dōgen, all beings see the world as 'flowers in space.'

> There is what is seen by clouded eyes, what is seen by clear eyes, what is seen by the Buddha's eyes, what is seen by the patriarchs' eyes, what is seen by the eyes of the truth, what is seen by blind eyes, what is seen by three thousand years, what is seen by eight hundred years, what is seen by hundreds of kalpas, and what is seen by countless kalpas. All these see flowers in space, but space itself is multifarious, and flowers are diverse. (Dōgen 1994, 14)

Herein, Dōgen's perspectivism reveals a general skepticism regarding our ability to objectively understand the nature of the phenomenal world. Indeed, this perspectivism has epistemic affinities with

Nietzsche, mainly that 'facts' are never understood independently from our interpretations; 'facts' too are mind-dependent. Dōgen alludes to this when he states, "Remember, the buddhas in the ten directions are not unreal;" meaning it is not the case that they are essentially non-existent, "they are originally just the flowers in our eyes" (Dōgen 1994, 19).[142] However, that being said, Dōgen recognizes that this illusory world of flowers in space is not random nor arbitrary; "The world has causes, and the world has effects. We enact cause-and-effect that is this world, and we accept the cause-and-effect that is the world" (Dōgen 1994, 10). And, based upon the causal regularities we conventionally perceive through this world of 'flowers in space,' we are able to formulate inferences despite our recognition that they do not reveal mind-independent truths; thus, Dōgen states:

> This exact moment of flowers arriving is never a random event. Apricot and willow flowers inevitably bloom on apricot and willow trees; looking at [apricot and willow] flowers we can identify apricot and willow trees, and looking at apricot and willow trees we can distinguish [apricot and willow] flowers. Peach and plum flowers never bloom on apricot and willow trees. Apricot and willow flowers bloom on apricot and willow trees, and peach and plum flowers bloom on peach and plum trees. Flowers in space blooming in space are also like this; they never bloom on other things and never bloom on other trees. Looking at the various colors of space flowers, one imagines the limitlessness of space fruits. (Dōgen 1994, 14-15)

If we interpret this passage in light of the two truths, while there is no ultimate truth that one can realize about the nature of reality, causal regularities do afford us the ability to formulate conventional judgments regarding fruits that grow on trees vs. fruits that grow on vines; hence, Dōgen's moderate skepticism which, as I contend, includes normative matters as well. While we may not be able to know what is ultimately right or wrong, good or evil, so that all moral judgments for any given situation are completely

[142] Dōgen's skepticism in *Kuge* has roots in *Awakening of Faith*. In the second chapter of this Mahāyāna text, "The Correction of Evil Attachments," it states, "All evil attachments originate from biased views; if a man is free from bias, he will be free from evil attachments" (Hakeda 1967, 74). Herein, human bias, vis-à-vis evil attachments, include: (1) belief in the self (Skt. atman); and (2) belief that external world is 'real' (Hakeda 1967). In other words, according to the *Awakening of Faith*, realism proper engenders evil attachments; thus, to overcome evil attachments, one must affirm an anti-realist perspective. "[The way to correct this error is] to understand clearly that 'empty space' is a delusive concept, the substance of which is nonexistent and unreal. It is merely predicated in relation to [its correlative] corporeal objects. If it is taken as a being [termed nonbeing], a negative being, then it should be discarded, because] it causes the mind to remain in samsara. In fact there are no external corporeal objects, because all objects are originally of the mind. And as long as there are no corporeal objects at all, 'empty space' cannot be maintained. All objects are of the mind alone; but when illusions arise, [objects which are regarded as real] appear. When the mind is free from its deluded activities, then all objects [imagined as real] vanish of themselves" (Hakeda 1967, 75).

'case-closed' matters *a priori*, such skepticism does not preclude our ability to formulate conventional moral beliefs of right and wrong, good or bad; judgments and beliefs, as well as the inferences we formulate from them, quite often work just fine in fostering deep personal relationships and civic responsibilities that matter to us as 'flowers in space.' We are able to formulate moral imperatives and express our judgments as they are relative to our attitudinal leanings. However, that being said, while such expressions are conventionally pragmatic and relative to our attitudinal leanings, I do not believe Dōgen would consider such expressions to be 'true' in the sense of what is true for one culture is 'true' despite being false for another culture. In fact, in *Kuge* it is clear that Dōgen wants to avoid any position that either affirms or completely denies 'truth' proper; "To turn one's back on the Truth is wrong, and to approach the Truth is also wrong" (Dōgen 1994, 17). And, as we have seen in both Chapter four and Chapter five, Dōgen avoids using strong epistemic terms such as 'truth' in the context of normative issues.

Based upon Dōgen's skeptical outlook, particularly in light of his anti-realist leanings, one might conclude that Dōgen is an error theorist or fictionalist; that moral propositions expressed in Zen literature, *kōan* and encounter dialogues are either completely erroneous and false, or pragmatic fictions. There are several reasons why I think these metaethical characterizations fail to capture Dōgen's perspectivism. First, in regards to error theory, Dōgen would likely argue that there is no firm duality between what is 'true' and what is 'false' as thinkers such as J.L. Mackie maintain. In fact, in *Kuge*, Dōgen alludes to this very point when he poses the question, "Is there anyone who knows that this wrong is also the truth?" (Dōgen, 1994, 17). Thus, I do not think error theory captures Dōgen's perspective regarding the status of moral propositions, such as 'don't think about good or bad' when practicing *zazen*, or preparing and serving meals for fellow monks. And in regards to fictionalism, it is not obvious that Dōgen thinks that his normative instructions to the *tenzo*, or his instructions on how to practice *zazen*, are useful fictions either; the fact that Dōgen wrote prolifically on 'all matters Buddhist,' and invested his being-time in a way-seeking practice that is both physically, mentally and emotionally demanding indicates, *prima fac*ie,

that he did not view his perspectivism as a mere fiction. After all, if we examine fictionalism through Austin's analytic lens of descriptive and performative speech acts, we discover that for any given normative speech act, it is either a false description of reality or a performative lie, or both (e.g., Bill Clinton's "I did not have sex with that woman!"). As we have noted, Dōgen's Way-seeking approach to ethics is not an attempt to describe the nature of reality; thus it is unlikely that he considered his *Shōbōgenzō* to be anything like a novel, fable or myth. And when we consider his writings from a performative lens, it is also not obvious that he considered himself to be liar or 'bullshit' artist. In his insightful book *On Bullshit*, Harry G. Frankfurt provides a crisp analytic treatment of the subtle differences between these two modes of deception; according to Frankfurt, "Lying and bluffing are both modes of misrepresentation," however, "the bullshitter is faking things" (Frankfurt 2005, 46).

For these reasons, I contend that the cognitivist standpoints of error theory and fictionalism fall short in being able to capture Dōgen's nuanced metaethical perspective. According to Dōgen, the conventional truths and normative beliefs that we express are tailored to human needs, desires and conceptions of individual and collective flourishing; they are not independent from human perspectives and interpretations. Thus, due to the dynamism of perspectives and interpretations, humans invent and create values through language, rather than discover and objectively describe such. And, in regards to the other anti-realist perspective, non-cognitivism, we have already noted three reasons for resisting this characterization. They include: (1) the disparity between the Way-seeking perspective of Dōgen, vis-à-vis path of the bodhisattva, and the truth-seeking perspective of Anglo-American metaethics; (2) the disparity between the fact that non-cognitivists maintain firm distinctions between feelings and reason, while Dōgen's philosophy of emptiness denies any absolute distinction between the two; and (3) that moral propositions are not, as non-cognitivism maintains, reducible to feelings, but rather, in light of the vows of the bodhisattva, arise from a more primal, prereflective force which is realized through non-thinking and the not-doing mode of being that is salient to *zazen* practice. This normative practice, which is not limited to seated meditation, but is meant to be embodied as effortless flow throughout our day to

day lives, is anti-cognitive. Accordingly, rather than attempting to find an additional theory to explain how anti-realism in general, Dōgen's anti-realism in particular, can justify normative judgments about the conventional world, perhaps grounding such in practice, mainly *zazen*, will be fruitful 'apricot blossoms and willow flowers.' For this reason, I believe anti-cognitivism is an appropriate characterization of Dōgen's perspective regarding what normative statements mean, and what they say.[143]

The fact that Dōgen's ethics is not reducible to either of error-theory/fictionalism or non-cognitivism does not mean, as noted in previous chapters, that certain concepts and ideas that Western metaethical theories use to think about the nature of values and moral beliefs are unhelpful for examining Dōgen's perspective. In regards to non-cognitivism in particular, the emphasis it places upon the embodied affects provides a helpful lens for interpreting Dōgen's practice of ethics, vis-à-vis *zazen*, as well as his sensitivity to the dynamism of perspectives that constitute the human and "more-than-human-world." As evidenced in a good many fascicles including "The Mountains and Waters Sutra," *Sansui-kyō*, and "Insentient Beings Preach Dharma," *Mujo Seppo*, Dōgen's open-ended, egoless perspectivism is non-anthropocentric as it pluralistically includes the perspectives of fishes, birds, mountains and rivers.[144] From the perspective of non-thinking, one becomes attuned to the realization that one's perspective, *sub specie aeternitatis*, is simply one perspective amongst a good many; thus there are no normative judgments or expressions that are cognitively true. In the context of the practice of non-thinking it is

[143] As I noted in Chapter two and Chapter three, Guilbault's conventionalism and Davis' 'contextualism' are effective for clarifying what normative propositions say, vis-à-vis Dōgen's metaethics; however, they fall short in clarifying what our normative expressions mean. Notwithstanding their interpretations, I contend that anti-cognitivism does both.

[144] In Chapter seven, I will be examining the metaethical position of non-anthropocentrism more closely; and, because this concept is closely associated with the applied ethics discipline of environmental ethics, I will attempt to generally situate Dōgen in relation to some leading thinkers in this field that have proffered different versions of non-anthropocentrism. In short, non-anthropocentrism maintains that humans are not inherently more valuable than other non-human beings.

clear that Dōgen's perspectivism is not entangled within cognitivist truths and/or principles; rather, it is dynamically somatic and embodied.[145]

As I noted in Chapter three, Dōgen maintains, specifically in the *Bendōwa* fascicle, that the practice of zazen is distinct from the meditative practices of concentration (Skt. *śamatha*) and insight (Skt. *vipaśanā*); what distinguishes such is Dōgen's conception of the body. Contrary to early Buddhist perspectives, vis-à-vis meditation and the "The Foundations of Mindfulness" (Pāli *Satipatthāna Sutta*), whereby the body is viewed as repulsive and foul, in the *Sanjushichi-Bon-Bodai-Bunpo* fascicle, "Thirty-Seven Elements of Bodhi," Dōgen views the body as a vehicle for liberation. As Van der Braak explains:

> In zazen, a situation is created in which the drives cultivate themselves. As Yuasa puts it, the departure point of cultivation assumes not the mind dominating the body, but rather, the body's dominating the mind. To sit in meditation is to carry out this attitude. Zazen facilitates an attitude where the conscious mental process can take a step back, and the body can dominate the mind. The question could arise, what is it that puts the body in the right situation? And what recognizes what is the right situation? The Buddhist answer to this would be: bodaishin, the drive toward awakening. Bodaishin manifests itself as a conscious intention to practice zazen but is itself a result of a particular configuration of the bodily drives. Therefore, bodaishin cannot be cultivated directly; it will develop as the body is further cultivated. (Van der Braak 2011, 76).

Ultimately, Dōgen's perspective of *zazen* as an embodied practice, vis-à-vis 'this body itself is Buddha' (Jpn. *sokushin-jōbutsu*) reflects a paradigm shift within East Asian Buddhist traditions, such as *T'ien-T'ai* (Jpn. *Tendai*) and Hua-Yen (Jpn. *Kegon*). For example, in a *T'ien T'ai* text on meditation, *The Method of Concentration and Insight* (Ch. *Ta-ch'eng chih-kuan fa-men*), it states:

> As to the function of concentration and insight: It means that because of the accomplishment of concentration, the Pure Mind is realized in substance, the nature of which is without duality is

[145] As I noted in Chapter three, the emphasis Dōgen places upon the body, vis-à-vis the practice of zazen, has been explored by Dōgen scholars Shigenori Nagatomo and André van der Braak. In the next chapter we will see how their perspectives of embodiment help clarify Dōgen's non-anthropocentrism. For right now it is worth noting that from Dōgen's perspective, the body has greater priority over that of the mind, vis-à-vis zazen. As Van der Braak explains, "In zazen, a situation is created in which the drives cultivate themselves. As Yuasa puts it, the departure point of cultivation assumes not the mind dominating the body, but rather, the body's dominating the mind. To sit in meditation is to carry out this attitude. Zazen facilitates an attitude where the conscious mental process can take a step back, and the body can dominate the mind. The question could arise, what is it that puts the body in the right situation? And what recognizes what is the right situation? The Buddhist answer to this would be: bodaishin, the drive toward awakening. Bodaishin manifests itself as a conscious intention to practice zazen but is itself a result of a particular configuration of the bodily drives. Therefore, bodaishin cannot be cultivated directly; it will develop as the body is further cultivated" (Van der Braak 2011, 76).

> harmonized through principle (*li*, rational nature of things), these and all sentient beings are harmoniously identified to form a body of one single character. Thereupon the Three Treasures are merged together without being three, and because of this the Two Levels of Truth are fused without being two. How calm, still and pure! How deep, stable and quiet! How pure and clear the inner silence! It functions without character of functioning, and acts without character of acting. (Chan 1963, 404).

In this passage, the *T'ien T'ai* patriarch Hui-ssu (514-577) does not promote a philosophy and practice of *śamatha* and *vipaśanā* whereby the body is normatively viewed as repulsive, but rather as a part of the nondual nature of existence, vis-à-vis three bodies of the Buddha.[146]In the context of Dōgen's Zen, I contend that the embodiment of *zazen*, vis-à-vis non-thinking, is itself an expression of a particular perspective; more specifically in regards to the justification of conventional normative judgments, the embodiment of the 'mountain still state' is anti-cognitive.

As a metaethical counterpart to anti-realism, I contend that anti-cognitivism, vis-à-vis *zazen*, is a sound characterization of Dōgen's metaethics; normative propositions in general, the somatic expressivism of zazen in particular, do not describe mind-independent facts, nor do they express mind-independent truths, but rather reveal and conceal perspectives. Thus, normative utterances are, following Steve Heine's lead, a mode of 'nonspeaking' via non-thinking; "Expressivity is […] a crucial component of Dōgen's ongoing religious quest to realize enlightenment and accomplish the accompanying pedagogical mission of transmitting the Dharma to a new generation of followers studying Zen in a remote country" (Heine 2020, 148).

> The *Treasury* thus serves the dual function of being a caretaker or guardian of tradition, introducing and propagating Chinese approaches in the Japanese context, and a disrupter or reformer of this legacy, producing a substantial body of work that –in irreverent, tables-turning fashion characteristic of Zen discourse–is continually undermining and revising traditional standpoints. Dōgen's insightfully critical handling of Chan literary materials that often originated in the oral delivery of lectures or sermons constitutes an approach to nonspeaking designed to stymie the stereotypical views of disciples and reorient their minds toward a state of nonthinking that explores all possible perspectives without being fixated on any specific option. (Heine 2020, 147)

[146] Notwithstanding this perspective of embodiment, Hui-ssu notes that the manner by which this non-dual mode of concentration and insight is realized is itself a mode of non-action that parallels Dōgen's philosophy of 'without committing' (Jpn. *makusa*) noted above; "It functions with character of functioning, and acts without character of acting (Chan 1963, 404).

As a normative mode of expression, *zazen* is neither a dualistic mode of speaking, vis-à-vis thinking, nor a quietist retreat from speaking via not-thinking; rather, it is an anti-cognitivist mode of 'nonspeaking' via non-thinking. By following the instructions of: (1) sitting in half or full lotus posture; (2) wearing loose clothing; (3) placing the hands in line with the naval and keeping the body erect; (4) pressing the tongue against the roof of the mouth, and with the mouth and teeth closed allowing for one's breath to pass effortlessly in and out of the nose; and (5) keeping the eyes open in a fixed gaze, one is able to realize the embodied affective state of 'non-thinking,' that is beyond the dualities of rationality and irrationality, speaking and not speaking. Non-thinking is, in other words, affectively realized through thinking of not-thinking; it is an affective awareness that transforms thinking from its anthropocentric orientation to its non-anthropocentric/egoless perspectivism.[147] Thus, rather than interpreting the embodied awareness of non-thinking as the suppression of thinking and speaking, non-thinking is constantly intimate with all of the dualisms and discriminatory thoughts that constitute our thinking speaking; "Nonthinking is not opposed to thinking […] it is the open field of awareness that encompasses and engenders thinking" (Davis 2016, 219).

§ 6.6 The Ethical Practice of "Dropping-off Body-Mind"

The mode of non-thinking that is realized in the mountain-still state of practicing *zazen* is captured by additional verses in both the *Zazenshin* and *Zazengi*. Beginning with the latter, Dōgen writes, "Cast aside all involvements and discontinue all affairs. Good is not thought of, evil is not thought of. It is not mind, intellect or consciousness; it is not thoughts, ideas or perceptions. Do not intend to make

[147] Kim identifies and explains Dōgen's nonanthropocentric modes-of-thinking when he states: "Along this line of thought, thinking is also said to be exerted by "the mind of the entire great earth" (*jindaichi no kokoro*), by "the mind of trees and stones" (*bokuseki shin*), by "the mind of mountains and rivers and the great earth (*seng daichi shin*), by "the mind of the sun, moon, and stars" (*nichigetsu seishin shin)*, and "by the one mind of all dharmas" (*issaihō isshin*). Elsewhere Dōgen uses the expression "thinking of the ten directions (*jippō shiyui*). All these locutions are not whims of fantasy. On the contrary, Dōgen's mystic vision situates thinking firmly in the context of existentiality and temporality of the human condition. Better yet, the logic of intimacy between self and the universe in terms of thinking is indelibly part of Dōgen's Zen" (Kim 2007, 86-87).

Buddha; slough off sitting still" (Dōgen; 1988, 177). With these instructions, Dōgen echoes the poetic prescription made in verse ten of Seng Ts'an's *On Believing In Mind*:

> Abide not with dualism,
> Carefully avoid pursuing it;
> As soon as you have right and wrong,
> Confusion ensues, and Mind is lost. (Conze 1959, 172)

For Dōgen, if one's *zazen* practice is consumed by thinking about moral ideas, values, principles or judgments, then one's sitting will only perpetuate psychological grasping and clinging. The duality of good and evil is like an illusion, or a mirage; they are nothing other than 'flowers in our eyes.' To philosophically entertain such concepts is not only distracting, but can also undermine our ability to rid ourselves of our obsessive attachments to moral views, as well as the 'mind' that conceptualizes such.

The 'mind,' according to Dōgen's Zen, is empty. Any habits of thinking that condition a view of mind that is otherwise (i.e. essentialism) should be "cast off" (Jpn. *datsuraku*). Herein, one might argue that these instructions for practicing *zazen* imply that metaethics is something we must let go of, leave behind, and do away with. However, I believe that any attempt to transcend metaethics is a metaethical position of its own kind. Moreover, in light of Dōgen's reflections on the characterization of Zen as a 'separate transmission' which we explored in Chapter four, to think that *zazen* situates us in a position whereby metaethics is no longer a practice, or something one should have never engaged at all, would be blinded by dualistic thinking. Dōgen's emphasis upon *zazen*, non-thinking and dropping off body and mind, is metaethical; however, the central difference between Dōgen's metaethics and Anglo-American metaethics is a difference in the practice of doing philosophy itself. Truth-seeking metaethics views the practice of philosophy as a means to arrive at 'truth.' Way-seeking metaethics on the other hand understands 'truth' to be the practice of philosophizing itself; "The Truth is the approaching and the turning away, which, in each instance of approaching or turning away, are the Truth itself" (Dōgen 1994, 17).

How does one "cast off" dualistic thinking that reifies subject and object, mind and body? Dōgen anticipates this question in the *Fukanzazengi* when he states, "We should learn the backward step of turning light and reflecting. Body and mind will naturally fall away, and the original features will manifest themselves before us" (Dōgen 1994, 280). What is significant here is the capping phrase "turning back the radiance," (Jpn.*ekō-henshō*) (ZS 4.54), which is regarded as an antecedent condition for, "dropping off body and mind" (Jpn. *shinjin datsuraku*). According to Dōgen, dropping off body and mind is realized if, and only if, "we learn the backward step of turning light and reflecting." But what does it mean to turn back the radiance and reflect? To answer this question, let us consider the well-known analogy of the lamp.

Just as an oil lamp can illuminate objects in a room, our minds illuminate the external world of mountains, rivers, rocks and trees; and, just as oil lamps illuminate their own form of flickering in relation to the other phenomena that they are illuminating, our minds illuminate our own mode of thinking. Hence Dōgen's perspectival verse from *Genjō Kōan*: "When we use the whole body-and-mind to look at forms, and when we use the whole body-and-mind to listen to sounds, even though we are sensing them directly, it is not like the mirror's reflection of an image, and not like water and the moon. While we are experiencing one side, we are blind to the other side" (Dōgen 1994, 34). Herein, according to Dōgen, our perspective of the world is always limited to our momentary situation; "To grasp the pivot and express it: all that exists throughout the whole Universe is lined up in a series and at the same time is individual moments of Time. Because [Time] is Existence-Time, it is my Existence-Time" (Dōgen 1994, 112). In other words, while there is nothing inherently distinct between our moment-by-moment perspective of the world and that of any other perspective within the greater web of beings, we nevertheless experience the world from our perspective. In the context of turning back the radiance (Jpn. *ekō henshō*) we can only turn back the radiance of our own awareness and perspective; our self-awareness is not that of birds nor fishes, mountains nor rivers, nor other humans. However, that being said, the phenomenological state of our self-awareness is not inherently different from that of all other beings. As Dōgen emphatically states,

when we turn back the radiance and "let our own body-and-mind, and the body-and-mind of the external world, fall away," the Buddha's truth is realized (Dōgen 1994, 34). And while turning back of the radiance is something that we can experience from our own perspective of existence-time, our words and letters, and how we use them, can trigger a 'turning' of the radiance (i.e. turning words) in the perspectives of both oneself and others.[148]

Turning back the radiance upon itself involves the intentionality of directing our awareness towards itself rather than towards those entities and beings that fill our awareness of the external world. This phenomenological technique of *zazen* does not, however, illuminate something new, such as a hidden or concealed property or formula about ourselves and/or the universe as a whole. Similar to the nature of good, bad, and indifference, the mind is 'uncreated' (Jpn. *mushō*). While we are aware of ourselves having experiences of the great many 'flowers in space,' we can never experience our 'awareness' singly, or as an independent thing. Turning back the radiance, in short, is the phenomenological embodiment of realizing that all values are 'uncreated' (Jpn. *mushō*); turning back the radiance, I contend, is how Dōgen's non-thinking is realized via *zazen*. As Davis explains through the popular Zen metaphors of clouds and sky:

> When we are told to "think of not-thinking," we, who in our delusion identify ourselves with the stream of cloudy consciousness, are being asked to turn our attention to the sky, which cannot but first appear, from the perspective of the cloudy discriminating mind, as a contentless, formless void. But as we engage in the "backward step," as we disidentify with, detach ourselves from, or "drop off" the body-mind, that is, as we let dissipate the clouds of our discriminatory, intentional thinking/feeling/willing, and as we thereby awaken to the open space of awareness that has always already been there underneath the passing clouds, we realize our true self, our original face, is the clear and open sky surrounding, and making room for the passing clouds. (Davis 2016, 223).

[148] Herein, the idea of 'turning words' (Jpn. ichitengo) is directly referenced in Dōgen's Kenbutsu fascicle, "Meeting Buddha." For example, he states, "we should make it seen and heard ceaselessly through our own ears and eyes, we should get free of it through our own body, mind, bones, and marrow, and we should make it clear through our own mountains, rivers, and Universe. Such is the action of learning the state of Buddhist patriarchs. Do not think that, because it is your own speech and conduct, it cannot make your own eyes clear. Being transformed by our own words of transformation, we get free of the view of our own transformation into a Buddhist patriarch" (Dōgen 1994, 193).

For Dōgen, directing our awareness upon 'awareness' itself, *sub specie aeternitatis*, reveals a "mirroring" of phenomena, "which reflects things as they show themselves without distortion" (Davis 2016, 223). As Dōgen states in *Kokyo, "*The Eternal Mirror:"

> What all the buddhas and all the patriarchs have received and retained, and transmitted one-to-one, is the eternal mirror. They have the same view and the same face, the same image and the same cast, they share the same state and realize the same experience. A foreigner appears, a foreigner is reflected – one hundred and eight thousand of them. A Chinaman appears, a Chinaman is reflected – for a moment and for a thousand years. The past appears, the past is reflected; the present appears, the present is reflected; a Buddha appears, a Buddha is reflected; a patriarch appears, a patriarch is reflected. (Dōgen 1994, 239-240)

Thus the practice of mirroring via non-thinking is to be, "totally engaged in the vicissitudes of life with all its ups and downs […] on the basis of impartial compassion, rather than on the basis of egoistic craving and loathing" (Davis 2016, 223). To flesh out this practice of 'mirroring,' vis -à-vis non-thinking, we shall conclude this chapter with a review of the *bodhisattva's* vows as a way of 'justifying normative beliefs, while recognizing that there are no normative beliefs to be justified.'

§6.7 Justifying Normative Beliefs: The Path & Vows of the Bodhisattva

As noted above, Dōgen's practice of *zazen* and phenomenology of mirroring is believed to be connected, according to Davis, with impartial compassion. Some critics might argue that this practice and phenomenology is inadequate for justifying value judgments, vis-à-vis real world problems (e.g., reproductive rights, natural resource management, economic justice etc.). Since *zazen* is the casting-off of dualistic thinking based on impartial compassion, it seems to follow that any dualistic judgment, including "Bernie Madoff is a miser and cheat," is both 'dualistically deluded' and without justificatory support. All justificatory claims for any normative judgment will be dualistic. If *zazen*, and the phenomenology of non-thinking is to cast-off dualistic distinctions, then it becomes unclear how the practice of *zazen* is able to provide justificatory support for normative beliefs.

My response to this challenge pivots from Jien Erin McCarthy's treatment of Dōgen's *Shushōgi Paragraphs 22-23*, and reflections on compassion. According to McCarthy:

> Dōgen's compassion, whether for people, or animals, or water and trees, cannot be read as an ethical "system" – we will not find rules or imperatives here. Rather, we find an orientation from which to frame the problems – an orientation from which to figure out what the right thing is to do…and this will be exceedingly difficult, given that the nondual interconnectedness of everything means that "us" versus "them" or "wrong" versus "right" or "good" versus "evil" – the very frameworks we most often use to work out the "right" thing, the "beneficial" deed – must be abandoned. (McCarthy 2016, 157-158)

Dōgen's impartial compassion, vis-à-vis non-thinking, does not find justificatory support from dualistic moral principles, but rather through the vows and practice of the *bodhisattva* that are relative to Mahāyāna Buddhism in general, Dōgen's Zen in particular. In general, the *bodhisattva* is, "one on the path to perfect Buddhahood, whose task is to help beings compassionately while maintaining his or her own wisdom" (Harvey 2000, 123). Herein, the path is succinctly encapsulated by the four vows:

> However innumerable sentient beings are, I vow to save them.
>
> However inexhaustible the defilements are, I vow to extinguish them.
>
> However, immeasurable the dharmas are, I vow to master them.
>
> However incomparable enlightenment is, I vow to attain it. (Conze 1959, 183-184)

In regards to the first of the four vows, the wisdom of the bodhisattva "does not, in carrying out his infinite great compassionate deeds, consider that there is any ultimately, inherently existing being who is helped" (Williams 1989, 50). As stated in the Diamond Sutra:

> As many beings as there are in the universe of beings…all these I must lead to Nirvana…And yet, although innumerable beings have thus been led to Nirvana, no being at all has been led to Nirvana… If in a Bodhisattva the notion of a 'being' should take place, he could not be called a 'Bodhi-being'. (Conze 1958, 25)

Reflecting upon this vow in the context of Dōgen's *Shushōgi*, Tetsuzen Jason M. Wirth states that:

> This vow is not a mere resolve. It is the arousal of an aspiration to move beyond oneself (one's ego-self) to an awakened self, which is simultaneously an affirmation in compassion of one's love for oneself as all beings and for all beings as oneself. […] In the Mahāyāna tradition, the bodhisattva ideal, awakening to oneself as dying to oneself by awakening to oneself as all others, is the awakening of the full spectrum of the heart and mind, the realization of *bodhicitta*. For Dōgen, the awakening of this aspiration does not come from within oneself nor does it originate

> from the outside. The self with its interior and its environmental exterior has simultaneously been cast away and has fallen away to the awakening of the great earth itself. (Wirth 2016; 130)

From the perspective of Dōgen's Zen, the *bodhisattva's* path of "selfless compassion is what is naturally expressed when one acts in a spontaneous way – from one's underlying Buddha-nature – free from reflection and desire, which come from self-centeredness" (Harvey 2000, 144).

The non-dual logic of selfless compassion, vis-à-vis the vow to save all sentient beings knowing that there are no sentient beings to be saved, is predicated upon the realization that the *bodhisattva's* compassionate efforts are not centered upon actual persons, for Buddhist wisdom entails the insight that there are no persons or things that are not empty. The *bodhisattva's* compassionate efforts are, rather, oriented towards ameliorating suffering proper. As Mark Siderits explains, "Once I overcome the illusion of self, I will see that my desire to prevent my own pain is really just a desire to prevent pain, period" (Siderits 2007, 82).

For Dōgen, this metaethical insight is realized through the practice of four social relations, including: (1) free giving; (2) kind speech; (3) helpful conduct; (4) cooperation. Rather than seeking to justify our moral behavior/comportment with others by way of top-down reasoning, "what Dōgen does offer us is an orientation for living, a way of being-in-the-world" (McCarthy 2016, 155). In the *Shōbōgenzō* fascicle *Bodhaisatta-Shishobo*, "Four Elements of Bodhisattva's Social Relations," Dōgen alludes to the non-dual logic of selfless compassion – the embodied/affective attitude of interconnectedness – as he identifies and explains these social relations. For example, in regards to the free-giving, "in becoming giver and receiver, the subject and object of giving are connected" (Dōgen 1994, 30). Or, when considering the social relation of cooperation, Dōgen writes: "The task [of cooperation] means, for example, concrete behavior, a dignified attitude, and a real situation. There may be a principle of, after letting others identify with us, then letting ourselves identify with others. [The relations between] self and others are, depending on the occasion, without limit" (Dōgen 1994, 33). In other words, while there might be, as Dōgen indicates, a principle that follows from our social relations (e.g. one ought to act from selfless compassion), the metaethical import herein is that cooperation is a

practice that realizes that, "there are no permanent and atomic (independent) selves or entities. All dharmas (entities) are interrelated and interconnected. All dharmas arise through all other dharmas. Thus, there can be no absolute distinction between self and other. Every aspect of the self is thoroughly interrelated with every other: its environment, other beings, and other dharmas" (Putney 2016, 160). Moreover, because of the interconnectedness between self and other, it follows that the way we comport ourselves towards others, and the deeds that we commit in our everyday world of social relations, will reverberate back upon "oneself" (i.e. for every action there is an equal opposite reaction). As McCarthy explains:

> This same interconnectedness that makes figuring out the "right" deed to do so terribly complex also brings back those deeds to benefit us, when performed from a place of selflessness, from the prereflective consciousness that one attains through zazen, which enables us to respond with an ethics of spontaneous responsiveness. And responding from this place of selflessness allows the action to benefit us too. (McCarthy 2016, 158)

Thus it is from the normative state of non-thinking that one is able to realize the social relations of the *bodhisattva*, whereby the body-mind of self and others are "cast off."

Some critics, as McCarthy notes, may find this justificatory appeal, vis-à-vis the practice of *zazen* and non-thinking, simplistic and "naïve" (i.e. "what goes around comes around"). If we expect justification to be "systematic," then perhaps this critique is justified. That being said, this criticism would not be limited to Dōgen alone, but would extend to Western ethical theories, including utilitarianism, which maintains that one ought to "act so as to promote the greatest good for the greatest number," as well as Kantian ethics, which maintains that one must "act so as to never treat another rational being solely as a means to some other ends." In fact, most theories of justification, aside from the ethical logarithm of the Doctrine of Double Effect,[149] will appear to be too simplistic in light of the

[149] The doctrine of double effect is a duty-based ethical theory that argues that it is never morally permissible to commit a bad act so to bring about favorable consequences. Thus the rightness of any action is dependent upon whether action itself is right or good. However, there are circumstances whereby doing what is right will bring about a double effect of good and bad consequences. For such circumstances, which would include terminating a pregnancy so to save the life of a mother, the doctrine of double effect maintains that one may perform such an act if, and only if, the following conditions are met: 1) the action itself is good; 2) one did not intend to bring about the

complicated issues and problems that currently loom. Thus, I am inclined to agree with McCarthy's defense of Dōgen; "to say 'do beneficial deeds and they will come back to you' may not be particularly profound," however, that does not erase the fact that, "to pursue such an attitude of compassionate responsiveness, where there are no signposts but your own heart, is anything but trite" (McCarthy 2016, 158). The world is not ready-made with moral principles/facts/truths; it is, rather, a world that is perpetually changing on social, cultural and environmental horizons. Thus the path of the *bodhisattva* in such a world ought not, as we saw in the previous chapter, ignore cause and effect. Through the embodied practice of non-thinking, we are able to realize a non-dual relationship between self and other whereby our karmic relationships are undetermined, yet thoroughly interconnected.

§ 6.8 Chapter Summary

We saw in this chapter that zazen is central to the moral life for Dōgen. The priority Dōgen places upon this moral practice, which he believes to be the only way in which the virtues of Buddhist patriarchs and bodhisattvas are realized, is defended by his phenomenological reflections on thinking, not thinking and non-thinking. Herein we saw that the practice of non-thinking, according to Dōgen, is not divorced from dualistic thinking itself, but rather underlies such just as the sky underlies clouds. We discovered that this interpretation of non-thinking provides a praxis-oriented justificatory account for conventional normative beliefs, vis-à-vis social and environmental relations. Accordingly, this chapter showed how Dōgen's anti-realist and anti-cognitivist perspectivism is unique, comparatively speaking, on the stage of world-philosophy. His metaethics begins and ends in practice. And while one can, no doubt, derive principles from the practice of non-thinking and impartial compassion (e.g. "what goes around comes around"), such principles are not entirely helpful unless one is practicing the embodied method of *zazen*, and even then, such principles seem uninspiring, and thus less motivating, compared to 'what' is being 'reflected' before one's mind: the emptiness and non-duality of self and other.

bad effect; 3) that the bad effect is not a means by which the good effect is realized; 4) that the good effect is important enough to outweigh the bad effect.

Our inquiry into zazen as a normative practice showed that Dōgen's anti-realist perspective is neither an error theory, nor fictionalist, nor non-cognitivist. In regards to error theory, we noted that Dōgen does not share the same dualistic outlook as error theorists, vis-`a-vis firm distinctions between truth and falsity. In regards to fictionalism, we saw that, in light of the distinction between descriptive and performative speech acts, it does not seem obvious that Dōgen conceived of his writings and normative judgments to be either: (1) fictitious descriptions about the world; or (2) performative misrepresentations (e.g., a liar, con artist and/or bullshit artist). And, in regards to non-cognitivism, as I noted in chapter three, due to the duality this metaethical view assumes between affects and reason, as well as facts and values, it became clear that this perspective does not clearly capture Dōgen's embodied practice of *zazen*. Thus, rather than putting forward another metaethical theory to show how anti-realism can provide justificatory support for conventional normative judgments, Dōgen proffers a practice instead. This normative practice, particularly when considering the nature of normative propositions, I contend, is best characterized as anti-cognitive. From the perspective of non-thinking, normative propositions are not intended to report moral facts about the world, nor to express normative truths; instead, normative propositions are the 'entangled vines,' *kattō*, whereby perspectives are, depending upon how we express such, either revealed, concealed, or both.

Chapter Seven

Non-Anthropocentric Value Creation: Dōgen and Nietzsche's Faithfulness to the 'Great Earth'

§7.1 *Chapter Overview*

The examination of metaethics I carried out in Chapter one revealed that Nietzsche's writings on normative issues is best characterized as anti-realism. And, as a metethical counterpart, vis-à-vis the nature of normative propositions, I argued that that anti-cognitivism, rather than error theory/fictionalism or non-cognitivism, helps clarify Nietzsche's perspective that normative utterances do not describe moral facts, nor do they express normative truths, but instead, they reveal and conceal perspectives. Then in Chapter two, after a review of the various ways scholars have interpreted Buddhist ethical views through Western philosophies and ethical theories, I proceeded to unpack Dōgen's metaethics in Chapters three, four, five and six. Therein, I argued that Dōgen's writings on the moral life – specifically the nature of moral values and normative propositions, karma and the practice of *zazen* – is best characterized as an East-Asian version of moral anti-realism, which can be fruitfully approached, as was the case with Nietzsche, through the lens of anti-cognitivism. Now, the objective of this chapter is to open up a comparative dialogue between Dōgen and Nietzsche.

The comparative dialogue I will foster between these thinkers will proceed by highlighting the background of Buddhism and Nietzsche scholarship in general, Zen/Dōgen and Nietzsche scholarship in particular. This will allow for me to build off of the insights of scholars such as Graham Parkes and André van der Braak, specifically Van der Braak's characterization of Dōgen and Nietzsche's philosophical outlook as non-essentialist, non-teleological and non-anthropocentric. In addition, I will also explore some salient themes and ideas regarding the metaethical practice of value creation from a Nietzschean perspective, which will in turn help illuminate how Dōgen incorporates the creation of new values into his Zen perspective. Then, in light of the three aforementioned metaethical labels Van der Braak uses to describe Nietzsche and Dōgen, I will frame my comparative inquiry around the topic of

non-anthropocentrism by considering Lynn White Jr.'s argument that the ecological crisis, as we know it, is a result of anthropocentrism, particularly Judeo-Christian anthropocentrism. According to White, if we are to realize a sustainable solution to this crisis, we either have to: (1) rethink the philosophical underpinnings of Judeo-Christianity, or (2) find and adopt a new perspective. By affirming (2) through the looking-glass of Dōgen-Nietzschean metaethical value creation, I will sketch out a metaethical profile of non-anthropocentrism that can provide a road map for overcoming a "crisis of meaning" that is ostensibly reflected through contemporary lifestyles that are environmentally degrading. For Dōgen and Nietzsche, this profile consists of *perspectivism, passions* and *play*; and, while there are some philosophical affinities between this profile of non-anthropocentrism and the normative standpoints of biocentrism, ecocentrism and deep ecology, I plan to show that Dōgen and Nietzsche are best interpreted on their own terms rather than being lumped within any of the three philosophical camps in contemporary environmental ethics.

§7.2 Nietzsche and Buddhism

Much has been written on the comparative interfaces between Nietzsche and Buddhism. While it is widely recognized that Nietzsche was highly critical of early Indian Buddhism, thus characterizing such as nihilistic,[150] there have been a number of philosophical parallels drawn between this nineteenth century

[150] Nietzsche's characterization of Theravāda Buddhism as nihilistic is made clear in number of works, including *The Antichrist*. Therein he states, "With my condemnation of Christianity I should not like to have done an injustice to a religion which is related to it and the number of whose followers is even greater; I refer to Buddhism. As nihilistic religions, they are akin, – they are religions of decadence, –while each is separated from the other in the most extraordinary fashion" (Nietzsche 2000, 23). As noted I noted in Chapter one, nihilism is a cultural phenomenon whereby the highest values within society are realized to be erroneous. According to Nietzsche, this cultural phenomena conditions two perspectival modes of existing: (1) active nihilism; and (2) passive nihilism. In regards to the former, the realization that the highest values in society are not objectively real (i.e. anti-realism) gives rise to, "increased power of the spirit;" whereas, in regards to latter, the realization that all values are without any metaphysical foundation engenders a, "decline and recession of the power of the spirit" (Nietzsche 1967, 17). Based upon Nietzsche's characterization of Buddhism as nihilism, Robert Morrison states: "To ask whether Buddhism is or is not a form of passive nihilism is to ask whether the *summum bonum* of Buddhism, *nirvāṇa*, can be understood in this sense. In other words, is the seeking after the goal of *nirvāṇa* 'a sign of weakness', a consequence of the 'decline and recession of the power of the spirit' and a pervading 'state of depression' that comes from seeing that the world does not have the value we thought it had?" (Morrison 2000, 30). Morrison contends that Nietzsche's characterization of Buddhism as nihilistic – passive nihilism – is due to Hermann Oldenberg's translations of early Buddhist discourses. See Hermann Oldenberg, *The Buddha: His Life, His*

forerunner of existentialism and this heterodox tradition of ancient India. For example, riding the coattails of Freny Mistry's *Nietzsche and Buddhism* (1981), Robert Morrison argues in *Nietzsche and Buddhism: A Study in Nihilism and Ironic Affinities*, that there are indeed striking affinities between Nietzsche and Buddhism, particularly in regards to self-overcoming and mind development; "The Buddhist version of self-overcoming reveals what can be described as a progressive unfoldment of energy and 'power.' It involves the unfolding of new configurations of energy and power each of which, […] can be viewed as the unfolding of a series of new 'selves'" (Morrison 1997, 195). Thus, it is Morrison's contention that Nietzsche's dim view of Buddhism as nihilistic might have been more favorable if he had had access to the updated translations of the early sutras that we have today. Moreover, he counterfactually implies that had he had such access, he would have discovered a method of self-overcoming which his perspectivism failed to provide.

> Although self-overcoming as consciously taken up by the individual is the central theme of Nietzsche's answer to nihilism, it is not sufficiently worked out; he has left no clear, detailed account of how self-overcoming is to be achieved, left no guiding examples of his method or methods. (Morrison 1997, 158-159)

Morrison's conclusion, however, has received criticism from other scholars working in this comparative field. Graham Parkes gives a scathing critique of Morrison's research, arguing that it is rife with historical inaccuracies and questionable interpretations/understandings of Nietzsche's philosophical works, specifically the body, vis-à-vis self-overcoming. According to Parkes:

> When one goes beyond the question of influence to comparative studies per se, later Buddhism provides […] even more fertile ground. The extension of the comparison to Mahāyāna schools of Buddhist philosophy, which has already been well begun by Japanese scholars, promises even

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Doctrine, His Order, trans. W. Hoey, (London: Williams and Norgate, 1882). Morrison maintains that, "if Oldenberg had not mistranslated the term *vibhava-taṇhā* or 'thirst for annihilation' as *der Vergänglichkeitsdurst* or 'thirst for impermanence', but translated it more correctly as *Selbstvernichtungsbegehren* or 'thirst for self-annihilation', given that this thirst for annihilation is considered to be an unskillful state to be abandoned, Nietzsche might have paused to reconsider whether Buddhism actually taught a nihilistic doctrine or not." (Morrison 2000, 51). Notwithstanding Morrison's research, Nietzsche did interpret Buddhism as passive nihilism, not active nihilism. In in *The Will To Power*, Nietzsche states, "the weary nihilism that no longer attacks; its most famous form, Buddhism; a passive nihilism, a sign of weakness" (Nietzsche 1967, 18). Finally, it is worth noting that Nietzsche's views of Buddhism were informed by his interpretation and critique of Arthur Schopenhauer; Schopenhauer believed that his views on suffering, his philosophy of denial of the will to live, and his general metaethical outlook that life itself is vain were basically the same as the historical Buddha's teachings (Wirth 2019).

> greater increases in our understanding of Nietzsche, Buddhism, and--more important--ourselves and the world" (Parkes 2000, 6).

Parkes' conclusion is supported by his earlier publications such as "Nietzsche and Nishitani on the Self-overcoming of Nihilism*"* (1990), and *Nietzsche and Asian Thought* (1991).

Since Morrison's publication, Antoine Panaïoti has advanced a comparative dialogue between Nietzsche and early Buddhism in *Nietzsche and Buddhist Philosophy*. Rather than simply listing philosophical affinities and differences between Buddhism and Nietzsche, he employs the comparative method in order to fuse the horizons between Nietzsche and Buddhism into a new perspective for confronting the challenge of nihilism, "on the discursive plane of the medical discourse" vis-à-vis "healthy vs. sick types" (Panaïoti 2013, 13). Ultimately, Panaïoti's work marks a progressive step in the area of comparative philosophy whereby the enumeration of affinities and differences is allotted a peripheral goal.

§7.3 Nietzsche and Zen

I am sympathetic with Parkes' hermeneutical contention; East Asian Mahāyāna Buddhism provides a richer, more fertile ground than that of early Indian Buddhism for engaging Nietzsche within the broader field of comparative philosophy. For starters, when one encounters Nietzsche's literary works, particularly his maxims and aphorisms from *Human, All Too Human*, and, *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, one quickly discovers a tenor of pith and wit that echoes the expressive style of Zen capping phrases (Jpn. *jakugo*) and the non-dualistic wisdom of *bodhisattvas*, hermits and sages. In his "Assorted Opinions and Maxims" from *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche states: "You must learn how to emerge out of unclean situations cleaner, and if necessary to wash yourself with dirty clean water" (Nietzsche 1986, 230). Herein, Nietzsche's non-dual perspective captures a salient theme in Zen Buddhism, mainly the nonduality of sacred and profane boundaries vis-à-vis delusion and enlightenment, *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*; from a Zen perspective, "delusive passions are themselves enlightenment," (Jpn. *bonnō soku bodai*) (ZS 5.350), and, because "true jade stands out in mud," (Jpn. *shingyoku deichū ni i nari*) (ZS

5.188), "he washes jade in muddy water," (Jpn. *Deisui ni gyokuseki o arau*) (ZS 5.261). Moreover, just as Zen resists dualistic distinctions between means and ends, for example "Not apart from right-here, always clear," (Jpn. *Tōsho o hanarezu tsune ni tannen*) (ZS 7.346), in *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, Nietzsche echoes a non-teleological perspective whereby, "Not every end is the goal. The end of a melody is not its goal; and yet: as long as the melody has not reached its end, it also hasn't reached its goal. A parable" (Nietzsche 1986, 360).

One can discern additional parallels between Nietzsche's aphoristic style and Zen in regards to the body and overcoming our passions. For both Nietzsche and Zen, the body which hosts a constellation of passions that can pull us down, is also the very same body that can elevate. The following Zen verse evinces this very point: "The whole body is illness, the whole body is medicine," (Jpn. *Tsūshin kore yami tsūshin kore kusuri*) (ZS 7.312). In light of this capping phrase, consider what Nietzsche has to say about overcoming the passions in *Daybreak*: "One can dispose of one's drives like a gardener and, though few know it, cultivate the shoots of anger, pity, curiosity, vanity as productively and profitably as a beautiful tree on a trellis" (Nietzsche 1977, 335). In this passage, Nietzsche's gardening metaphor (i.e. our body as the soil and our passions are cultivated plants) reveals a philosophy of embodiment whereby our very passions provide the basic ingredients for self-mastery. And, when it comes to self-mastery via self-overcoming, similar to the Zen maxim, "Practitioners of the Way, just sit!" (Jpn. *Dōshi kou sunawachi za seyo*) (ZS 5.281), Nietzsche reminds his audience that, "Lying still and thinking little is the cheapest medicine for all sickness of the soul and, if persisted with, grows more pleasant by the hour" (Nietzsche 1986, 293). In regards to embodiment, again, similar to Zen, Nietzsche's standpoint holds the body in higher regard compared to rationality and world views/convictions. The four-character capping phrase "He's lost his head, he believes in reflections" (Jpn. *Kōbe ni mayoi, kage o tomu*) (ZS 4.192), is all-too-Nietzschean when it comes to epistemology and the convictions we view the world through; "He who has not passed through different convictions, but remains in the belief in whose net he was first captured, is on account of this unchangeability under all circumstances a representative of retarded cultures"

(Nietzsche 1986, 200). Finally, on the horizon of time, vis-à-vis the eternal recurrence of the same, we find a Zen distillation of the life affirming standard that is central to Nietzsche's perspectivism: "Make one moment of thought an eternity," (Jpn. *Ichinen bannen ni shi sare*) (ZS 5.18). We can compare this to Nietzsche's motto from *Ecce Homo*: "My formula for greatness in a human being is *amor fati*: that one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity. Not merely to bear that what is necessary, still less conceal it – all idealism is mendaciousness in the face of what is necessary – but love it" (Nietzsche 1967, 258). Thus, based upon our inquiry into Nietzsche and Dōgen throughout this dissertation, I contend that their metaethical persepctives is succinctly expressed within the folloing capping phrase: "I have no 'thou shalt' or 'thou shalt not,' (Jpn. *Ka mo naku fuka mo nashi*) (ZS 5.35).

In addition to this selection of maxims and aphorisms, one can identify other philosophical parallels between Nietzsche and Zen which open up a comparative dialogue along the following horizons: (1) philosophy as a praxis; (2) self-overcoming of nihilism; (3) phenomenology of non-thinking; and (4) ethics and non-anthropocentric value creation. Michael Skowron, for example, examines the theme of self-overcoming, vis-à-vis 'post religious' religiosity and ethics in *Nietzsche, Buddha, Zarathustra: Eine West-Ost Konfiguration*. In addition to Skowron's comparative research, particularly between Nietzsche's proclamation of the 'death of god' and the Zen maxim "when you see the Buddha, kill the Buddha" (Skowron 2006, 143), in *Nietzsche and Zen: Self-overcoming Without a Self,* André van der Braak addresses many of these themes, and more, by exploring the works of Nietzsche in dialogue with Mahāyāna and Zen thinkers such as Nāgārjuna, Linji, Dōgen and the Kyoto School philosopher, Keiji Nishitani.

One argumentative thread woven through Van der Braak's research is that a comparative dialogue between Zen and Nietzsche is fruitful because both perspectives can be considered philosophies of self-overcoming in four different ways. First, in a theoretical sense, both Nietzsche and Zen view self-overcoming as the pivot for doing philosophy. In regards to Nietzsche, "life conceived as will to power, is that which continually overcomes itself. Also, as an individual, it is in one's very nature as a creature

of will to power that one must continually overcome oneself" (Van der Braak 2011, 25). And, in regards to Zen, self-overcoming is tied to the overcoming of delusion and realizing enlightenment. However, unlike early Buddhist conceptions of enlightenment, "Zen stresses that enlightenment is non-teleological; it vehemently criticizes early Buddhist conceptions of enlightenment as a goal to be reached" (Van der Braak 2011, 26). Second, in a performative sense, rather than attempting to establish a theoretical system, the writings of Nietzsche and Zen attempt to bring about "a self-overcoming in the reader" (Van der Braak 2011, 26). Herein, the idea of the philosopher as a physician or therapist is apropos. Third, in a self-referential sense, both Nietzsche and Zen never view their practice of doing philosophy as unfolding in some linear, teleological fashion. For thinkers such as Dōgen and Nietzsche, their praxis-based, way-seeking style, "continually overcomes itself…continually contradicts and leaves behind earlier positions and perspectives, and goes to great lengths to avoid being frozen into a system" (Van der Braak 2011, 26). Finally, in a self-expressive sense, the practice of self-overcoming for Nietzsche and Zen is itself "viewed as a celebration…a philosophy of laughter and play" (Van der Braak 2011, 27).

In addition to Parkes, Skowron and Van der Braak, other scholars have helped foster a comparative dialogue between Nietzsche and Zen, including Bret Davis, "Zen After Zarathustra: The Problem of the Will in the Confrontation between Nietzsche and Buddhism," Manu Bazzano, *Buddha is Dead: Nietzsche and the Dawn of European Zen*, and Jason Wirth, *Nietzsche and Other Buddhas: Philosophy After Comparative Philosophy*. Notwithstanding the comparative insights proffered by Davis and Bazzano, Wirth's work has opened up a new horizon of philosophical inquiry that leads readers back to the prephilosophical soil in which the roots of philosophy grow; "In the co-illuminating confrontation in which Nietzsche emerges as a kind of Buddha, he and other Buddhas do so simultaneously revealing the prephilosophical ground of any possible philosophy" (Wirth 2019, xvii). Wirth's exploration of Nietzsche in dialogue with other Buddhas —Arthur Schopenhauer, William James, Gilles Deleuze, Dōgen, Shinran, Hakuin, and Hajime Tanabe—helps set the stage to ruminate on the practice of philosophical thinking itself, and thereby question what actually is deserving of philosophical thought.

Of the many insightful points Wirth notes, perhaps the idea of philosophy as medicine and the subject matter of food are most profound, particularly from the vantage points of Nietzsche and Dōgen; "Thinking is about health and nutrition, just as the Buddha's teachings were medicine. Lost amid such cursed idealism, food remains necessary yet curiously inconspicuous" (Wirth 2019, 80). In regards to Nietzsche, Wirth states:

> Nietzsche's understanding of Great Health refused the paradigm that health is absence of disease and poison. The same holds true for his understanding of nutrition and digestion. A nutritious diet is not the automatic result of ingesting what the medical industrial complex and Big Pharma prescribe as health food. Not only does diet depend on attuning to the singularities of one's own body and using a hammer against the ideology of health, but it also relies on being able to digest and process what one eats so that it transforms food into nourishment. […] Since thoughts happen in the body and not in a spiritual stratosphere, thought can also be metaphorically nutritious. Food for thought – thought that can be ruminated and digested – is critical for philosophy. Nietzsche regarded his decadent era as dyspeptic, unable to digest the death of God and its poisonous nihilism. Self overcoming, active forgetting, and active nihilism […] can be understood as digestion metaphors, the capacity to process poison […] into healthy modes of thinking and living. (Wirth 2019, 82)

And in regards to Dōgen, Wirth highlights Dōgen's instructions to the monastery cook (Jpn. *tenzo*), and the joyful mind (Jpn. *kishin*) that accompanies the preparation of food for monks. "Joy is the realization that one can just prepare food. The *tenzo* does not have to dream of paradise to take joy in preparing food. Even when the ingredients are meager and the prospects for satiation are dim, it is enough to simply be able to practice in the kitchen. This is the *tenzo's* version of *amor fati* and her gratitude for things just as they are" (Wirth 2019, 90-91). From a Dōgen-Nietzschean perspective of 'philosophy after comparative philosophy,' "Food does not hide itself. Lacking the true Dharma eye, it is we who do not see food. […] It is not that we don't just see food, but that we don't see at all, and hence we do not even see that we do not see. If one cannot see food, one cannot see anything. If one sees at all, one sees food" (Wirth 2019, 91). Herein, I am quite sympathetic with the comparative dialogues that Wirth orchestrates; I contend that one's inability to see food, which is no doubt evidenced by our industrial agricultural system and packaged food choices, is itself a symptom of one's inability to see the 'Great Earth' as the non-philosophical source of meaning and value; it is a result, in other words, of our anthropocentrism. Thus, my goal in this chapter is to contribute to this growing field of research by focusing specifically on

Nietzsche and Dōgen. By examining their philosophies in dialogue together, particularly their metaethics of value creation, we will be able to see how our examination of a philosophical text through a different cultural lens can open up new meanings, insights and subsequent questions. To set the stage for this comparative dialogue, let us first examine the metaethical practice of value creation from a Nietzschean perspective, which will in turn help illuminate Dōgen.

§7.4 *Will-to-Power and Value Creation*

The will to power is pivotal for making sense of Nietzsche's writings on ethics in general, the values of an active nihilist, vis-à-vis master morality, in particular.[151] For example, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, the will to power appears quite prominently, as in Part One "On The Prejudices of the Philosophers," where Nietzsche states, "A living thing seeks above all to discharge its strength – life itself is will to power" (Nietzsche 1966, 21). As Bernd Magnus and Kathleen Higgins state in "Nietzsche's Works and Their Themes," when the will to power is understood as the ontological ground for Nietzsche's perspectivism, "one can read the quest of each thing for its own power, or enhancement, as inherently situated, ontologically located in a position that is distinct from that of every other entity" (Magnus and Higgins 1996, 48). That being said, some Nietzsche scholars, including Bernard Reginster and Ivan Soll, argue that Nietzsche was primarily interested in understanding the will to power in psychological terms, particularly in response to Schopenhauer's pessimism and passive nihilism.

In his book *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche On Overcoming Nihilism*, Reginster defends the view that the will to power is a psychological thesis, as it is realized through our overcoming resistance and the creation of values. Ivan Soll, in his article "Nietzsche's Will To Power As a Psychological Thesis: Reactions to Bernard Reginster," shares this general outlook; however, he believes that there are some analytic particulars that Reginster overlooks. By briefly considering the differences in their

[151] For the active nihilist, the revaluation and creation of values is a practice that demands strength, and so, is dependent upon realizing will to power.

interpretations of Nietzsche's will to power as a psychological thesis we will be in a better position to understand the metaethical significance of Nietzsche's philosophy of value creation.

According to Soll, will to power as a psychological theory is a central pillar of Nietzsche's philosophy as a whole; and, like Reginster, he believes that the will to power is best understood as 'overcoming resistance.' However, Soll does not think that Reginster goes far enough to specify what 'overcoming resistance' entails, but rather leaves this ambiguous definition unexamined.

> One can read Nietzsche (1) as claiming that the overcoming of resistance is a necessary condition for the satisfaction of the will to power, that is, for the experience of one's power, or (2) as claiming that power is the overcoming of resistance – and nothing else. I believe it should be read in the first way rather than the second. Reginster unfortunately reads it in the second way, as if it supplied a definition of power, rather than just as stating a necessary condition of the satisfaction of the will to power. (Soll 2012, 123-124)

Soll's reasoning for making this distinction is tied to the metaethical issues of moral motivation.

> When Nietzsche became engaged in developing a theory in which power was posited as the ultimate motivation of all behavior, the ultimate satisfaction of all desire, and consequently the source of all value, he initially argued that what we really want is power rather than pleasure and the avoidance of pain, without specifying whether it is a state of being powerful or the experience of our own power that we want. As he continued to develop his thesis, however, he became aware of this distinction, which he initially had ignored, and chose to refine his thesis by opting for an experiential variant. What we want, he claims, is more power, but more precisely, the experience of power. (Soll 2012, 124)

While Soll's more specified interpretation of the will to power compared to Reginster's might seem hair splitting, the distinction is quite significant, particularly when one considers the difference between conceiving power as an 'activity' or as a 'capacity.' Contrary to Reginster's interpretation of overcoming resistance as an activity, Soll understands such as a capacity; "A power is what enables various sorts of actions; it is not the actions themselves" (Soll 2012, 126).[152] In Nietzsche's *The Will To Power*, he states, "The will to power can manifest itself only against resistances; therefore it seeks that which resists it" (Nietzsche 1967, 346). To seek out resistances and thereby evaluate that which shall be overcome, entails

[152] This does not mean that simply having a capacity is sufficient for being powerful and realizing 'will to power.' To borrow an example used by Soll, one could unknowingly be a member of a royal family, and thereby have the powerful capacity to command, and yet, because this individual is not aware that they have royal powers to command, they will never be able to experience and feel the benefits of having such power.

having a capacity to execute one's will to power. And, when it comes to the actual experience of overcoming any resisting force, one realizes such as a feeling; "When we do something there arises a feeling of force, often even before the deed, occasioned by the idea of what is to be done (as at the sight of an enemy or an obstacle to which we feel ourselves equal): it is always an accompanying feeling" (Nietzsche 1967, 350). As a psychological thesis, Nietzsche argues that, "the will to power is the primitive form of affect, that all other affects are only developments of it" (Nietzsche 1967, 366).

The importance Nietzsche places upon value creation is coherently tied to his philosophy of power itself; for Nietzsche, "Value is the highest quantum of power that a man is able to incorporate – a man: not mankind!" (Nietzsche 1967, 380). As an aspect of our psychology, it is our values, vis-à -vis what we say 'yes' and 'no' to, that have the greatest weight and forceful capacity to motivate us to act in self-determined ways. Accordingly, the creation of that which is most forceful is what Nietzsche finds to be a defining psychological trait of a master morality that will provide a philosophy for the future, a future that contains new life affirming values to live by; "Toward new philosophers; there is no choice; toward spirits strong and original enough to provide the stimuli for opposite valuations and to revalue and invert "eternal' values" (Nietzsche 1966, 117). While the revaluation of values is prominently featured in his later writings, including *Ecce Homo* and *The Antichrist*, according to Thomas Brobjer, Nietzsche had already begun developing this yes-saying philosophical perspective within *The Joyous Science*: "In this: that the weights of all things must be determined anew" (Nietzsche 2018, 172). And, as Brobjer states, "It was Nietzsche who coined the German word '*Umwerthung*' (revaluation), and he was the first thinker to use the associated expressions '*Umwerthung aller Werthe*" and '*Umwerthung der Werthe"*" (Brobjer 2010, 14). Thus, metaethical inquiry was central to Nietzsche's practice of doing philosophy as he, "frequently turns other questions such as epistemological and ontological ones into axiological ones, making values pivotal in his thinking" (Brobjer 2010, 12). Metaethically, the revaluation of values can be understood, according to Brobjer and André van der Braak, as an attempt to: (1) transvaluate old values into new values; (2) critically examine the genealogy of moral beliefs and value systems; (3) reverse and

transform contemporary values into their opposites; and (4) return to pre-Christian values, which Nietzsche believed to be a healthier type. According to Van der Braak, "these four interpretations are ideal types, and a mixture of them probably gives the most insight into the nature of Nietzsche's project" (Van der Braak 2011, 179). The scope of this philosophical project, particularly when he was writing *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, is specifically oriented around the ideas of the eternal recurrence of the same and the *Űbermensch*, or 'overman.'

The eternal recurrence of the same and the overman provide a philosophical lens for understanding how the will to power is a psychological thesis that embodies a yes-saying attitude in response to the death of 'God' and ascetic ideals. Beginning with the former, the eternal recurrence reflects a metaphysical world similar to that of *samsāra*, the eternal wheel of rebirth according to Hinduism and Buddhism, whereby there is no beginning nor end to existence, and, each life is reborn over and over, again and again. However, what makes Nietzsche's philosophy of the eternal recurrence of the same novel in comparison is that he does not include the conception of rebirth that Hinduism and early Buddhism champion, whereby our actions in this life determine what our future lives will be like. The eternal recurrence of existence, according to Nietzsche, will remain the same. How one lives today will mirror how one will live in every future recurrence of existence; everything, will be completely the same. As a cosmological possibility rather than a theory per se,[153] the eternal recurrence of the same provides a revaluation of Christian cosmology and metaphysics, vis-à-vis teleology, whereby we will all continue to

[153] Similar to the will to power which is best interpreted as a psychological thesis rather than a metaphysical theory, the eternal recurrence of the same is, I contend, best understood as a metaethical thought experiment for testing our moral psychology, vis-à-vis will to power. While some scholars, including Linda Williams and Joseph Palencik, believe that the eternal recurrence of the same welcomes cosmological interpretations, it is not my intention to evaluate the merits of their reasoning. That being said, their interpretation is philosophically inviting. In "Re-evaluating Nietzsche's Cosmology of Eternal Recurrence" (2004), they contend that "Nietzsche may have presumed that with a finite number of combinations, eventually every combination state will either occur or be rendered impossible. When this happens, the combination series (the world) ends. With no other possible combinations available, nothing more can happen according to whatever Nietzsche believes "conditions" the universe" (Williams and Palencik 2004, 404). Based upon this belief, they maintain that it follows that "every world is a recurrence, but not necessarily of the immediately preceding world. Nietzsche's belief in infinite time expresses this, due to every possible world series needing to arise eventually. When events occur, their connectedness precludes others from the realm of possibility and thus necessitates that the world must end, and with this reasoning Nietzsche can then argue for the recurrence of particular sequences that must occur in time" (Williams and Palencik 2004, 404).

walk the pathways of our lives again, and again and again for an eternity; "And return and walk in that other lane, out there, before us, in this long dreadful lane – must we not eternally return?" (Nietzsche 1954, 270). In addition to sameness, while both Hinduism and early Buddhism champion a philosophy of transcendence, *mokśa* according to Hinduism and *nirvāṇa* according to Buddhism, for Nietzsche, one cannot escape nor transcend this existence.

I contend that Nietzsche intended for us to ruminate upon the eternal recurrence of the same as a metaethical thought experiment/parable, vis-à-vis value creation. Herein, my contention pivots from Gabriel Zamosc's interpretation in "Life, Death and Eternal Recurrence in Nietzsche's Zarathustra." In this article Zamosc argues, contrary to the cosmological interpretation, that "the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence is best understood as a parable concerning the creative will, the will to power, of which the individual human being, while he is alive, is merely a surrogate. What recurs is the moment of action, which Nietzsche describes poetically as a moment of transitory death and resurrection; a moment that the living agent must repeat eternally while he remains alive" (Zamosc 2015, 1). If it is the case that our existence will repeat itself over and over again for an eternity, we are now prompted to ask ourselves how one ought to live so that one can say 'yes' to this existence for an eternity.[154]

As a metaethical thought experiment, it is clear from Nietzsche's notes that the practice of value creation is how one embodies a 'yes saying' spirit vis-à-vis *amor fati*. For example:

1. The idea [eternal recurrence]: the presuppositions that would have to be true if it were true. Its consequences.
2. As the hardest idea: its probable effect if it were not prevented, i.e., if all values are not revalued.
3. Means of enduring it: the revaluation of all values. No longer joy in certainty but in uncertainty; no longer "cause and effect" but the continually creative; no longer will to preservation but to power; no longer the humble expression, "everything is merely subjective," but "it is also our work! – Let us be proud of it!" (Nietzsche 1967, 545)

[154] According to Zamosc, "To embrace Eternal Recurrence is to love the fate of being incarnations of the will to power that must eternally return to themselves while they remain in existence. This love of fate liberates our will and allows us to pursue the ideal of the *Übermensch* (superhuman) by inoculating us against the fantasy of believing that one day we will transcend our human condition. We will never escape our humanity, which will follow us like a shadow wherever we go" (Zamosc 2015, 10).

In (1), Nietzsche is clear that this idea is not scientifically proven, but rather a perspective that has consequences, specifically moral consequences. For example, one might immediately cringe when one realizes that every embarrassing, difficult and painful moment will be repeated for an eternity; one might indignantly engage in hand wringing about the status of current political affairs and pop-culture's social-media trends and habits; one might fall into despair about having to eternally face environmental degradation and species extinction over and over again for an eternity. In other words, depending upon the individual's perspective, the eternal recurrence provides a set of conditions that can condition one to fall prey to pessimism and passive nihilism. The fact that a good many individuals value the idea and achievement of a goal, and because many religions, Christianity and early Buddhism in particular, include goals within their webs of belief, vis-à-vis the metaphysical and moral structure of the universe, it seems likely that a good many individuals will not be optimistic regarding the prospects and purpose of living this existence over and over, again and again. But it is precisely this teleological value system that the very idea of the eternal recurrence of the same is reevaluating. In regards to (2), Nietzsche understands that this thought experiment is hard to endure for reasons noted by Van der Braak; "The thought of the eternal recurrence as the greatest heavyweight serves as a personal instrument to assist in de-valuing all values. To philosophize with the thought of the eternal recurrence as a hammer means to demolish all cultural ideals based upon some utopian future" (Van der Braak 2011, 182). And in regards to (3), again, to quote Van der Braak, "If Nietzsche's philosophy of the eternal recurrence is to get off the ground, a revaluation of values is indispensable […] The revaluation of values is an inner process of transformation" (Van der Braak 2011, 182). As an inner process of transformation, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* the revaluation of values is reflected in "Of the Three Metamorphoses," and is embodied in the *Űbermensch*; "Man is a rope, tied between beast and overman – a rope over an abyss. A dangerous across, a dangerous on-the-way, a dangerous looking back, a dangerous shuddering and stopping" (Nietzsche 1954, 126). In light of this dangerous crossing-over, let us now pivot to an examination of the transformative mode of being that is realized through this process of self-overcoming: the *Űbermensch*.

Who is the overman? As Nietzsche states in *The Joyous Science*, someone who does not restrict their moral imagination according to a standard of right or wrong action:

> Let us confine ourselves, therefore, to the purification of our opinions and value judgments, and to the creation of our own standards of goodness – but let us no longer brood over the 'moral worth of actions'! Yes my friends! The time has come for us to turn away in disgust from all this nonsense of some standing in moral judgment over others […] We however, want to become who we are – something new, unique, incomparable, self-legislating and self-creating. (Nietzsche 2018, 214-215)

According to Nietzsche, self-overcoming, the creation of new values and the realization of the overman, because of the resistances one faces along this path of doing philosophy, is fueled by suffering. However, rather than viewing suffering as that which is to be avoided, pitied or labeled bad, Nietzsche's philosophy of the overman is a revaluation of the Christian and early Buddhist perspective of suffering and pity. Moreover, not only is the overman the type of person that will be fearless in the face of suffering, and thereby say 'yes' to such, the overman is one who also, contra traditional values, says 'yes' to the passions for they are the source from which our virtues are cultivated; "Once you suffered passions and called them evil. But now you have only your virtues left: they grew out of your passions." (Nietzsche 1982, 148-149). In regards to prudential values and the character traits that define the overman, while they are generated and cultivated from our capacity to overcome resistance via will to power, our experience of such is realized through our affects.[155] For example, when we consider the self-overcoming

[155] It is important to note that some scholars are skeptical towards any attempt to provide a coherent interpretation of the role of the affects in Nietzsche's metaethics in general, moral psychology in particular. In his article "Against Nietzsche's 'Theory' of Drives," Tom Stern argues that since Nietzsche failed to provide a coherent account of the 'drives,' particularly as they relate to thought and action, one ought not think that there is a single theory for making sense of this aspect of moral psychology. According to Stern "His 'drive' terminology is confusing; his skepticism about drives and actions is as far-reaching as the knowledge he claims (and needs) to have about them; the relation between drives and conscious deliberations is expounded in an overwhelming variety of different and often contradictory ways. This much is clear: if 'success' in philosophical writing means the production of an exegetically plausible, unique, and philosophically robust theory—the sort of thing that many scholars have aimed to produce from him—then it must be acknowledged that Nietzsche failed in this case. On that assumption, one should abandon him as philosophical psychologist and/or produce one's own, Nietzsche-inspired theory (provided the clash with Nietzsche is acknowledged)" (Stern 2015, 138). In this dissertation, my goal is not to provide a single theoretical lens for making sense of what Nietzsche states about the drives; instead, I am simply attempting to show that what he does say about the drives, particularly in regards to values, reveals an anti-realist and anti-cognitivist perspective. Such a perspective does not provide a positive account or theory of the nature of values and/or moral psychology. Rather, similar to the Mahāyāna philosophy of emptiness which does not provide a positive account of the nature of existence as an alternative to the essentialist philosophies it negates, anti-realism and anti-cognitivism reveal what doesn't exist, mainly objective values and normative truths, without providing an alternative metaethical account.

of one's former beliefs that are the byproduct of our affects and moral valuations, Nietzsche states in *Beyond Good and Evil*, "The will to overcome an affect is ultimately only the will of another, or several other, affects" (Nietzsche 1966, 86). And when we consider his reflections regarding one's self-overcoming of the passions, Nietzsche states the following in *The Wanderer and His Shadow*:

> The man who has overcome his passions has entered into possession of the most fertile ground; like the colonist who has mastered the forests and swamps. To sow the seeds of good spiritual works in the soil of the subdued passions is then the immediate urgent task. The overcoming itself is only a means, not a goal; if it is not so viewed, all kinds of weeds and devilish nonsense will quickly spring up in this rich soil now unoccupied, and soon there will be more confusion than ever was before. (Nietzsche 1977, 233)

For Nietzsche, overcoming our passions is not an ascetic ideal of eliminating the passions in order to achieve a goal of being-passionless (e.g., Stoicism); rather, overcoming the passions is a process of transformation, or sublimation. As Karl Jaspers explains, "To become a higher person for Nietzsche requires a process of sublimation wherein one transforms "coarse drives into refined ones," such as the transformation of sexual desire into love (amour-passion)" (Jaspers 1965, 137). Nietzsche's revaluation of values reveals a perspective whereby the passions in general, specific affects such as anger in particular, are not inherently terrible. Rather, the situation determines whether our passions become devastating torrents, or lead to 'good health' and self-mastery.

Nietzsche's philosophy of value creation is helpful for illuminating Dōgen's philosophical practice of value creation in general, non-anthropocentric value creation in particular. While Dōgen does not actually use metaethical terminology such as 'value creation,' it is quite clear that as a practice the creation of new values is salient to his establishing a new-religious movement/practice for the Japanese people. Indeed, this is evidenced through his practice of self-overcoming, vis-à-vis Buddha-nature, original enlightenment (Jpn. *hongaku*), and normative values, such as skillful means (Skt. *upāya*).[156] For example, in regards to normative values vis-à-vis the precepts, as we saw in the previous chapter Dōgen

[156] In Chapter three I explored how the concepts of original enlightenment and Buddha-nature shaped Dōgen's 'way-seeking' philosophy, which in turn provided a new and different perspective of Zen enlightenment than that of *Caodong* lineage which Dōgen received dharma transmission in the course of his journey to China.

resists a fundamentalist/foundationalist outlook; "Dōgen interprets the Buddhist precepts not as a 'thou shalt,' but as vows that embody the bodhisattva. […] The values of good and evil do not exist in themselves for Dōgen, but are the temporary configurations resulting from ever-changing conditions. Therefore, to conform to these values is not a matter of following rules (from the other-oriented perspective) or even of moral deliberation (from a self-oriented perspective)" (Van der Braak 2011, 184-185). Thus, Van der Braak concludes with the following comparative insight, mainly "For Nietzsche as well as Dōgen, the self-overcoming of morality does not refer to an escape from or relativization of mundane existence (including its evil aspects), but to a more inclusive, affirmative perspective on duality" (Van der Braak 2011, 186). Pivoting from this comparative point, let us turn our attention to their metaethical perspective of non-anthropocentric value creation.

§ 7.5 *Dōgen, Nietzsche and Non-Anthropocentrism*

Our focus in this chapter is to see how Dōgen's and Nietzsche's metaethics might help us to articulate a non-anthropocentric conceptual scheme so that contemporary society can rethink their anthropocentric relationship with the earth. Within the field of environmental ethics, which is a discipline of applied ethics that includes metaethical inquiry,[157] there have been a number of non-anthropocentric perspectives advanced by scholars in order to provide a new horizon by which humankind can reevaluate their relationship with other species and ecosystems. For example, Peter Singer[158] and Tom Regan[159] have defended animal rights perspectives that call into question the exploitation of animals for: (1) agriculture; (2) medical research; (3) sport; and (4) entertainment. Going one stride further, Paul

[157] As I noted in the introduction, in light of J.S. Mill, metaethical inquiry and applied ethics are not mutually exclusive; they are not, in other words, normative silos. Anthropocentrism is an example of such overlap. While the concept 'anthropocentrism' is salient to the applied arena of environmental ethics, it is a metaethical concept. In principle, anthropocentrism maintains that humans are at the center of moral consideration, which in turn entails that the interests of humans inherently override the interests of other species and natural phenomena and ecosystems.
[158] See Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation: The Definitive Classic of the Animal Movement* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009).
[159] See Tom Regan, *All That Dwell Therein: Animal Rights and Environmental Ethics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

Taylor[160] defends a biocentric outlook whereby all life forms, regardless of whether such is sentient and/or has interests (i.e. subjects of life), are to be regarded as direct moral patients. And ecocentrists such as Aldo Leopold,[161] Holmes Rolston III,[162] Baird Callicott,[163] Bill Throop and Ned Hettinger[164] have defended a normative perspective whereby, in addition to non-human biotic components of nature, elemental beings, such as water and air, as well as whole ecosystems (e.g., bogs and wetlands) are included within one's compass of moral consideration. Despite the differences between these perspectives, these normative standpoints share the basic commitment that humans are not the crown of creation, and that human interests do not inherently override the interests of other beings.

In addition to, though notwithstanding, the aforementioned normative perspectives, deep ecologists such as Arne Naess,[165] Bill Devall,[166] George Sessions[167] and David Abram[168] have advanced a non-anthropocentric outlook that not only attempts recalibrate animal, land use and natural resource policies, but also provides a 'way seeking' path of attunement, vis-à-vis the more-than-human-world. I contend that what generally distinguishes deep ecological thinking from other non-anthropocentric perspectives is similar to how virtue theory is distinguishable from the action-based normative perspectives of deontology and utilitarianism; like virtue theory, deep ecologists maintain that the cultivation of one's character is a first-order concern. However, unlike Aristotle's virtue theory, deep ecologists maintain that the earth bears incorporation into our everyday comportment, life style and

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[160] See Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics* (Princeton University Press, 1986).
[161] See Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949).
[162] See Holmes Rolston III, *Conserving Natural Value* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
[163] See Baird J. Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic: Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).
[164] See Ned Hettinger and Bill Throop, "Refocusing Ecocentrism: De-emphasizing Stability and Defending Wildness," In *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*, Sixth ed. Ed. Louis Pojman And Paul Pojman (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2012).
[165] See Arne Naess, *The Ecology of Wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess*, ed. Alan Drengson and Bill Devall, (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint Press, 2010).
[166] See Bill Devall, *Deep Ecology: Living As If Nature Mattered*, (Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 1985).
[167] See George Sessions, *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century: Readings On the Philosophy and Practice of New Environmentalism*, (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1995).
[168] See David Abram, *Becoming Animal: An Earthly Cosmology*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2010).

mode-of-being so as to realize a meaningful 'existence-time.' And, in contradistinction to J.S. Mill, deep ecologists maintain that there is wisdom to be learned from 'nature', vis-à-vis normative 'thinking' and 'dwelling.' Herein, the existential horizon that deep ecology opens up is, *prima facie*, an inviting perspective for considering Dōgen and Nietzsche in dialogue together. That being said, I do not think that Dōgen and Nietzsche can be pigeonholed within deep ecology proper.[169] One reason supporting this contention is that the normative platform of deep ecology maintains the existence of objective/intrinsic value in nature; for Dōgen, as well as Nietzsche, while one can value nature intrinsically, their metaethical commitments to anti-realism clearly destabilizes any belief in objective/intrinsic value. Accordingly, rather than restricting our treatment of these anti-realist/anti-cognitivist thinkers to any of these versions of non-anthropocentrism, vis-à-vis contemporary environmental ethics, we shall explore how a Dōgen-Nietzschean perspectivism helps support a mode of value creation, via creative play, that can expand our moral imagination about the question of life's meaning, which I contend to be tied to the ecological crisis. Thus I plan to show how a Dōgen-Nietzschean perspective on the question of life's meaning can lay bare a "way-seeking" path towards overcoming the ideological perspective of anthropocentrism which is responsible for the deteriorating health of the earth.[170]

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[169] In his article "Voices of Mountains, Trees, and Rivers: Kūkai, Dōgen, and a Deeper Ecology," Graham Parkes argues that it would be a hasty generalization to lump the non-anthropocentric perspectives of East Asian Mahāyāna thinkers, such as Dōgen, within the environmental camp of deep ecology. I am sympathetic with Parkes' thesis, however for a different reason. According to Parkes, while deep ecology draws inspiration from East Asian philosophies such as Daoism and Buddhism, it is not entirely clear that their interpretations of such are accurate. Notwithstanding Parkes' position, I contend that deep ecology has inherited the ecocentric standpoint (e.g. Aldo Leopold, Baird Callicott and Holmes Rolston III) that there is a 'balance' of nature whereby the 'good' of ecosystems is to be realized through the beauty, integrity and stability of ecosystems (Leopold 1949). The notion that nature is stable, or that there is a balance to nature, is a myth. See John Kircher, *The Balance of Nature: Ecology's Enduring Myth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009). Thus, contrary to 'ecocentric essentialism', I am more sympathetic with Hettinger and Throop's ecocentric perspective whereby instability, fecundity and wildness is the ecological norm (Hettinger and Throop, 2012). If deep ecology were to emphasize this instability model of ecosystems, it is likely that they would have to rethink their normative commitments, including the belief that all beings have objective/intrinsic value. Ultimately, I contend that it is this deep ecological commitment –the existence of objective/intrinsic value – forestalls any attempt of reducing Dōgen's non-anthropocentric views, or those of Nietzsche, to deep ecology.

[170] As I noted above, one of the reasons why Dōgen and Nietzsche invite a comparative dialogue that goes beyond the mere listing of philosophical affinities is that their practice of doing philosophy is one of self-overcoming, vis-à-vis religion and ethics/culture. As Van der Braak writes in the epilogue of *Nietzsche and Zen: Self-overcoming Without a Self*: "Both Dōgen and Nietzsche take a soteriological term from their own native religious tradition (for

In order to set the stage for this comparative dialogue, it is important to identify the scope of non-anthropocentrism for both Dōgen and Nietzsche? For Dōgen, non-anthropocentrism is not so much an overtruning of Theravāda[171] and Mahāyāna[172] conceptions of nature, but rather a shift towards deemphasizing soteriological values that are centered upon human acheivement. Thus, rather than a difference in kind, Dōgen's attitudes toward 'nature', vis-à-vis non-anthropocentrism, is a difference in degree in comparison to early Buddhism and his Mahāyāna predecessors. Herein, my characterization of Dōgen's non-anthropocentrism builds off of Malcolm David Eckel research in "Is there a Buddhist Philosophy of Nature?"; according to Eckel, Buddhist anthropocentrism, "is genuinely concerned with the human achievement of human goals" (Eckel 1997, 341). Thus, "Beneath the evident differences between the Indian and East Asian traditions lie a commitment to the view that human beings work out their fates through the development and purification of their own minds" (Eckel 1997, 340). Eckel does however

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Nietzsche, Christian redemption, for Dōgen, Buddhist enlightenment), criticize its orthodox meaning as a final state beyond suffering, purge it of its metaphysical and transcendent connotations, and revalue its meaning out of this worldly orientation. Rather than present a new version of "the Zen experience" as a new attempt at radical transcendence or a new conception of religious experience, Dōgen's immanent transcendence, his radical phenomenalism, can serve to overcome the implicit dichotomies in Western modes of thought between inner and outer, mind and body, meditation and ritual, individual and society, spiritual and secular, and "religious life" and "ordinary life" (Van der Braak 2011, 191).

[171] The concept of nature in early Buddhism, according to Lily de Silva, "means everything in the world which is not organized and constructed by man. The Pāli equivalents which come closest to 'nature' are *loka* and *yathabhuta*. The former is usually translated as 'world,' while the latter literally means 'things as they really are.' The words *dhammata* and *niyama* are used in the Pāli canon to mean 'natural way or way'" (De Silva 2000, 91). See Lily de Silva, "Early Buddhist Attitudes Toward Nature," In *Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism*, ed. Stephanie Kaza and Kenneth Kraft (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2000) pp. 91-103.

[172] According to William LaFleur, Mahāyāna conceptions of nature are rooted within the, "universalism and logic of interdependence" (LaFleur 2000, 110). See William LaFleur, "Enlightenment for Plants and Trees," In *Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism*, ed. Staphanie Kaza and Kenneth Kraft (Boston: Shambhala Publishing, 2000) pp. 109-116. In light of LaFleur's research, I contend that Mahāyāna Buddhist attitudes toward nature are not different in kind from that of Theravāda, but rather a difference in degree. For example, based upon Lambert Schmithausen's research, in early Buddhism, plants and seeds were regarded as borderline cases vis-à-vis sentience. However, in the context of East Asian Mahāyāna Buddhism, rather than being classified as borderline cases, plants are included within the class of beings that have Buddha-nature (Schmithausen 2009). According to LaFleur, the inclusion of plants within the class of beings that have Buddha-nature, "dissolved the whole sentient/insentient distinction" (LaFleur 2000, 109). By dissolving the duality between sentient and insentient beings thereby led to the inclusion of elemental beings such as rocks and water and the whole environment within the class of beings that have Buddha-nature (Shmithausen 2009). For a thoroughgoing examination into the diverging perspectives and normative attitudes towards plants in Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhism, see Lambert Schmithausen, *Plants in Early Buddhism and the Far Eastern Idea of the Buddha-Nature of Grasses and Trees* (Bhairahawa: Lumbini, 2009).

note that there is a paradox embedded within this perspective since the goal of human achievement in Buddhism, mainly *nirvāṇa*, requires the realization of no-self, as well as honoring moral precepts that prohibit killing other beings, including non-human sentient creatures, and cultivating, "a fundamental respect for life in all its forms" (Eckel 1997, 342). And, in the context of Mahāyāna Buddhism, this paradox becomes magnified in light of the philosophy of interdependence;[173] in short, Eckel maintains that since the philosophy of interdependence is, "such a crucial part of Buddhist ethical theory," it follows that there is, "good reason to be skeptical of any form of centrism" (Eckel 1997, 344). In other words, the philosophy of interdepedence as presented, for example, in *The Flower Garland Sūtra* not only undercuts anthropocentrism, but also non-anthropocentric perspectives, including biocentrism and ecocentrism. Accoridngly, if non-anthropocentrism is destabilized by Mahāyāna philosophies, then it seems, according to Eckel's reasoning, unclear how Mahāyāna Buddhism in general, Zen in particular, could provide normative directives and prescriptions, vis-à-vis biocentrism or ecocentrism, for society to modify their anthropocentric values and exploitive habits.

I welcome Eckel's skepticism and critical thinking. When considering Dōgen's non-anthropocentrism, my intention is not to reduce such to any of the centrist persepctives, including bio-centrism, ecocentrism and deep ecology despite the fact that there are aspects of eco-philosophical thinking in Dōgen's writings that parallel these Western theories of environmental ethics.[174] Moreover, because Dōgen's non-anthropocentric perspective is tied to Mahāyāna Buddhist soteriology,[175] one will

[173] In regards to the Mahāyāna philosophy of interdependence, vis-à-vis non-duality, LaFleur states that, "By definition bodhi would have to be shared by all *sattva*: every kind of being and phenomenon there is. Strictly speaking, delusion begins when man thinks he is separable from his world or his environment, when he wants only some kind of private 'peace of mind. […] The whole mood and mode of Mahāyāna philosophy was to use logic to chop up logic's penchant for chopping up the world into multiple, disparate, and easily lost pieces" (LaFleur 2000, 111).

[174] For example, in his article "The Japanese Concept of Nature in Relation to the Environmental Ethics and Aesthetics of Aldo Leopold," Steve Odin shows that the East Asian Mahāyāna philosophy of nonduality is embedded within the ecocentric land ethic of Leopold and Callicott; according to this normative standpoint, "things in nature are not separate, independent, or substantial objects, but relational fields existing in mutual dependence upon each other, thus constituting a synergistic ecosystem of organisms interacting with their environment" (Odin 1997, 92-93).

[175] See Miranda Shaw, "Nature in Dōgen's Philosophy and Poetry," In *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* Vol 8, 2 (1985) pp. 111-132.

be unable to appreciate the depth of his non-anthropocentric thinking if one were to interpret such in light of land use ethics, vis-à-vis natural resource conservation and wilderness preservation; after all, Dōgen was not an environmental scientist, nor an environmental activist, but rather a Buddhist monk who was concerned with soteriological status of non-human beings and entities. In light of Dōgen's soteriological values, according to Miranda Shaw, his philosophy of nature is best characterized as a mode of horizontal transcendence.

What is horizontal transcendence? And, if such is an appropriate characterization of Dōgen, can we extend this label to Nietzsche? According to Shaw, horizontal transcendence refers to a mode of persepctivsim whereby, "one moves beyond the limits of a former situation and attains a new perspective or understanding, perhaps even on a universal scale" (Shaw 1985, 129). Contrary to 'radical immanentalism,'[176] Shaw maintains that, "transcendence is present in his thought as an experiential category. In order to experience an event in its thusness, one has to experience a breakthrough of awareness. One has to transcend the illusory boundaries of one's ego, "dropping body and mind," in order to attain the unitary mode of vision described in Dōgen's poetry and sermons" (Shaw 1985, 128). While I share Shaw's interpretation that Dōgen's philosophy of nature involves the experience of overcoming formerly held views and beliefs, I am not sympathetic with 'transcendence' as an appropriate characterization of his non-anthropocentric philosophy. In short, it is not obvious that the overcoming of one's formerly held beliefs and views entails transcendence of such in a way that they are obliterated from one's normative thinking and deliberations. Instead of transcendence, I contend that one creatively integrates their formerly held views into their new perspective in a way not unlike the process of metamorphosis that amphibious beings, such as frogs, undergo; just as a frog reabsorbs its tail from its former tadpole mode of existence instead of discarding such, I contend that the process of overcoming former perspectives involves the reabsorption of one's former views in order to give rise to a new

[176] Shaw's use of 'radical immanentalism' is in light of the fact that Dōgen did not conceive of Buddha-nature as something distinct from the moment by moment impermanence of concrete phenomena (Shaw 1985).

perspectivism. Notwithstanding this reason, I also contend that Shaw's characterization is teleological, which is not in keeping with Dōgen's non-teleological philosophy, vis-à-vis realizing Buddha-nature. Indeed, what is unique about Dōgen's perspectivism is that it involves continuous self-overcoming vis-à-vis delusion and enlightenment (i.e. ongoing non-teleological metamorphosis). Thus, I contend that 'metamorphosis', rather than transcendence, is a preferable characterization of the experiential process of arriving at any new perspective. The advantage of this characterization is that the process of metamorphosis preserves the transformative aspect of one's perspectivism while at the same time remaining immanently tied to the concrete here and now, vis-à-vis impermanence; the overcoming of one's former beliefs, via metamorphosis, reveals an imminent, 'this-worldly' perspectivism whereby all beings, including mountains, trees, rivers, stone lanterns etc. are Buddha-nature.

For Nietzsche, it is upon proclaiming that 'God is dead' that he proceeds to overcome the history of Western philosophy that is entrenched in Christian ascetic values; herein, his practice of overcoming, via philosophizing with a hammer, included overcoming anthropocentric conceptions of meaning and value. Since Christianity proffered a transcendent conception of meaning whereby humankind is the crown of creation within the Great Chain of Being, the question of life's meaning was never a matter of philosophical concern as God's 'ways' and 'divine plan' are beyond our grasp. In fact, as evidenced in Ecclesiastes, it is a mistake to even try to understand the purpose of our existence and the meaning of life: "For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow" (Ecclesiastes 1:8 [ESV]). However, 'this stage setting' collapses with the 'death of God' along with the 'old tablets' by which our morals and values are foundationally supported. That being said, rather than residing in a state of passive nihilism, Nietzsche's practice of self-overcoming led to a non-anthropocentric perspectivism. No longer do we need some conception of life's meaning that is wrapped up with metaphysical transcendence and otherworldly hopes; rather, we can passionately and playfully live this life through an embodied, 'light-footed,' non-dualistic relationship with the earth. Herein, similar to the experience of overcoming former perspectives, vis-à-vis Dōgen's philosophy of nature, the process of metamorphosis is

an all too fitting characterization of Nietzsche's 'way-seeking' practice of value creation. The Three "Metamorphoses of Spirit" in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, clearly supports this interpretation. The perspective of the camel, which is burdened by the heavy load of 'thou shalt' eventually becomes reabsorbed as an 'I will,' vis-à-vis the perspective of the lion, which in turn is reabsorbed by the yes-saying spirt of the 'child.' Thus, it is in regards to Nietzsche and Dōgen's practice of self-overcoming perspectives, via metamorphosis, that makes them philosophical companions on the path of comparative philosophy, vis-à-vis non-anthropocentrism.

§ 7.5 Environmental Crisis As A Crisis of Meaning

With regard to our current relationship with the earth, I want to argue that our current environmental crisis, which is fueled by the self-centered pursuit of 'fame and gain,' is the embodiment of a crisis of meaning due to anthropocentrism. Herein, I am sympathetic with Jason Wirth when he writes in the preface of *Mountains, Rivers, And The Great Earth: Reading Gary Snyder and Dōgen In An Age of Ecological Crisis*, "our unhinged relationship to the earth is a question of etiquette, of ethics, of finding a more sacred manner of wayfaring, of clear-eyed compassion for who and where we are" (Wirth 2017, xvii).[177] In addition to Wirth, I am also sympathetic with Shigennori Nagatomo's position, that dualistic

[177] Gary Snyder's essay, "Nets of Beads, Webs of Cells," demonstrates a 'clear eyed' attempt to wrestle with the many normative tensions, vis-à-vis social/economic/environmental constraints, that are illuminated by a 'live deliberately' sustainable lifestyle that affirms Buddhist precepts and normative ideals. According to Snyder, "The primary ethical injunction of Buddhism is known as the First Precept. It is against hurting and taking life, […] Not eating flesh is a common consequence of this precept in the Buddhist world, which has largely consisted of agrarian peoples. This has posed a thorny question for normally tolerant Buddhists in the matter of how to regard spiritual life of people in those societies for whom eating fish or animals may well be a matter of economic necessity. My own home place is beyond the zone of adequate water and good gardening soil, so my family and I have grappled with this question, even as we kept up our lay Buddhist life" (Snyder 2000, 346). Based upon my experience of homesteading in the hills of Vermont for the past fifteen years, I deeply appreciate Snyder's efforts to negotiate a sustainable livelihood that goes beyond simple ideals and practices that all too often ignore the hard realities of human overpopulation, scarcity of natural resources and economic inequality. "As a student of hunting and gathering cultures, I've tried to get some insight into fundamental human psychology by looking at the millennia of human hunting and gathering experience. […] When I kept chickens, we maintained the flock, the ecology, and the economy by eating excess young roosters and, at the other end of the life cycle, by stewing an occasional elderly hen. In doing this I experience one of the necessities of peasant life worldwide. They (and I) could not but run their flocks this way, for anything else would be a luxury–that is to say, uneconomic. […] The very distinction 'vegetarian/nonvegetarian' is too simple. Some populations, especially in India and Southeast Asia, are deliberate Buddhist and Hindu vegetarians, but most of the rest of the people of the Third World are semivegetarians by default. They are grateful for a little fish or chicken when they can get it. When and where people can live by

thinking conditions a perspective whereby humans think of themselves as 'beings-outside-of-nature' (Jpn. *shizengai sonzai*). In "The Logic of Not: An Inivitation To a Holistic Mode of Thinkin From An East Asian Perspective—An Essay In Celebration of Roger Ames On the Occasion of His Retirement," Nagatomo states:

> The difficulties we face today in addressing environmental issues have their root in this prioritization promoting dualism that generates an oppositional mode of understanding the relationship between nature and ourselves. If human beings pursue nature solely for the sake of satisfying their own ego-interests, which ego-logical thinking may promote, nature thus understood is objectified nature, and not nature that provides the foundations of life for human beings. Human beings and nature are understood in dualistic terms, where humans are thought to be in control of nature, but the current global environmental issues suggest that we are being controlled by nature instead. This occurs clearly as a consequence of distancing human beings from nature as a result of the objectification of nature. Pursuing nature for the sake of egotistical human interests creates an imbalance in the activity of nature, by overextending our desires beyond what our environment can provide. (Nagatomo 2018, 1256-1257)

As Nagatomo maintians, "Dualism is a logical consequence of accepting either-or logic as the model for understanding human reality" (Nagatomo 2018, 1242). Accordingly, since either-or logic presupposes essences, vis-à-vis law of identity, and because fixed essences, according to both Dōgen and Nietzsche, are not real, to interpret the world through this logical lens alone will condition erroneous conceptions of existence, including metaethical the standpoint of anthropocentrism.

In previous chapters we have seen how Dōgen's commitment to the philosophy of emptiness (Skt. *śūnyatā*) challenges the ultimate validity of either-or logic. In regards to Nietzsche, one can glean a

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grains and vegetables alone and get adequate nutrition, it is to be applauded. But there are people of high latitudes, of the grasslands and deserts and the mountains, who have always had to live by a mixed food economy. […] As for modern food production, although it is clear that the beef economy of the developed world is a wasteful luxury, it is doubtful that the Third World could easily get by without cows, chickens, pigs, sheep, and the life of the sea" (Snyder 2000, 348). As I interpret Snyder's 'Buddhist environmental ethic', while there are affinities between his perspective and the non-anthropocentric philosophies of animal rights/welfare, biocentrism, ecocentrism and deep ecology, I don't think we can pigeonhole him within such. The main reason supporting this contention is that Snyder wants to avoid a firm commitment to action guiding directives, such as those proffered by Singer, Regan, Leopold and Taylor; and because the perspectives of other non-anthropocentric philosophies, including Rolston, Hettinger and Throop are not motivated by Buddhist philosophies, such as Hua-yen's philosophy of totality and the Buddhist image of Indra's Net, there is good reason not to restrict our interpretation of his writings to such, despite the value Snyder places upon ecological thinking. And finally, in regards to Deep Ecology, it is not clear to me that Snyder's outlook, as reflected in the aforementioned passages, is an endorsement of the normative platform proffered by Naess, Devall and Sessions. Thus Snyder's holistic approach to environmental values, beliefs and practices are more in keeping with Buddhist thinkers, such as Dōgen, as Wirth's research shows.

glimpse of his epistemology and logic in *The Joyous Science*, whereby he challenges its foundations. For example, he writes in, "Origin of the Logical," that the foundations of logic, mainly the law of identity, is itself an illogical principle since nothing in nature is completely identical.

> How did logic arise in the human head? Doubtless, out of illogic, a domain which must originally have been immense. Countless beings who inferred differently from the way in which we do now perished; and yet they may have come nearer to the truth! For example, whoever was not able to identify the 'same' often enough with regard to food or predators, whoever subsumed too slowly or cautiously, had less chance of survival than those who responded to similar cases by immediately guessing that they were identical. The prevailing tendency, however, was to treat similar cases as identical – an illogical tendency since nothing is identical – and it was this which created the initial foundation for logic. In order for the notion of substance to arise (something indispensable to logic, although in the strictest sense nothing real corresponds to it), for the longest time it was likewise necessary for the mutability of things not to be seen, not to have been perceived; those creatures who did not see with exactitude had an advantage over those who saw everything 'in flux'. By itself, a skeptical tendency, the exercise of excessive caution in making inferences, is extremely dangerous. No living creature would have survived unless the opposite tendency – the tendency to affirm rather than to suspend judgment, to err and invent rather than to wait and see, to accept rather than to reject, to jump to conclusions rather than to do justice – had not grown extraordinarily strong" (Nietzsche 2018, 125).

Nietzsche's epistemic ruminations in the *Joyous Science* undergo further digestion in *Beyond Good and Evil* as well:

> The falseness of a judgment is for us not necessarily an objection to a judgment; in this respect our new language may sound strangest. The question is to what extent it is life-promoting, life preserving, species preserving, perhaps even species-cultivating. And we are fundamentally inclined to claim that the falsest judgments (which include synthetic judgments *a priori*) are the most indispensable for us; […] To recognize untruth as a condition of life–that certainly means resisting accustomed value feelings in a dangerous way; and a philosophy that risks this would by that token alone place itself beyond good and evil. (Nietzsche 1966, 12).

Herein, Nietzsche's perspective is, similar to Dōgen's, quite nuanced. For Dōgen, while either-or reasoning does not reveal corresponding truths about the world, it is, particularly in the context of language, indispensable to our everyday lives. Similarly for Nietzsche, while the law of identity does not reflect how the world is in itself, it is effective (i.e. pragmaitic truth) for promoting species survival. That being said, Nietzsche cautions his audience not to think that this is the only perspectival lens by which the world can be experienced; hence "Our New Limitlessness" from *The Joyous Science*, "But I think nowadays we are at least far from the ludicrous presumption of decreeing from our corner that only perspectives from that corner are possible. On the contrary, the world has once more become 'limitless'

to us, in so far as we cannot deny the possibility that it contains limitless interpretations" (Nietzsche 2018, 272). However, by recognizing that the world consists of a plurality of interpretations that are seemingly limitless, Nietzsche shares Dōgen's outlook whereby, "While experiencing one side, we are blind to the other side" (Dōgen 1994, 34); "We cannot see around our own corner; it is hopeless curiosity to want to know what other forms of intellect and perspectives might exist" (Nietzsche 2018, 272). As I interpret Dōgen and Nietzsche, while it is the case that dualistic logic is indispensable to living our lives, and while we are unable to completely shed our human perspective of the world, this does not necessarily entail the metaethical commitments of anthropocentrism. In other words, for Dōgen and Nietzsche, while our perspective of the world, and the value judgments we express, are anthropogenic (i.e. they are born out of our human perspective; they are human-mind-dependent), such anthropogenesis does not entail that humans are inherently more valuable than other non-human beings, or that they ought to be (i.e. anthropocentrism).[178]

I contend that both anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism are anthropogenic metaethical conceptual schemes by which we can prioritize values and interact/participate with the more-than-human-world. Thus, it is based upon this interpretation that I wholeheartedly resist the metaethical standpoint of William Murdy, who maintains that environmental values ought to be prioritized according to an anthropocentric metaethical lens. According to Murdy, anti-anthropocentric philosophies, including the perspective I am promoting, are self-contradictory since any attempt to embrace an anti-anthropocentric perspective actually leads to a more anthropocentric outlook than ordinary anthropocentrism. In his article "Anthropocentrism: A modern Version," Murdy notes that while anthropocentrism is pejorative in most publications on environmental ethics, it is not as concerning as many philosophers make it out to be. According to Murdy, if we agree that all species ought to be allowed to carry out their natural evolutionary role, then anthropocentrism, which is the philosophy that values mankind more highly than

[178] It is important to note that the idea that values are anthropogenic does not entail that values arise from human beings independent of their relationships with other beings. Instead, it simply showcases the metaethical view that values are always realized and experienced from human subjectivity.

any other species or being in nature, is 'natural.' After all, according to Murdy, all species naturally value themselves more than other species (i.e. "all earthly beings are speciocentric); "spiders are to be valued more highly than other things in nature – by spiders. It is proper for men to be anthropocentric and for spiders to be arachnocentric. This goes for all other living species" (Murdy; 1975, 281). Thus, if anti-anthropocentrism is committed to the moral belief that all species ought to be viewed as a part of nature, and should be able to exist naturally, then mankind cannot be viewed as an exception; we too are a part of nature. Accordingly, since all species are naturally speciocentric (i.e. they value their own species more than others), it logically follows that humans ought to be anthropocentric. To comport ourselves otherwise would be unnatural and thus set mankind apart from nature. Anthropocentrism is, as Murdy sees it, our speciocentric perspective.

In light of my position noted above, mainly that both anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism are anthropogenic, my general response to Murdy is informed by Joel Feinberg's standpoint against psychological egoism.[179] Psychological egoism argues that there are no genuine altruistic acts because acting altruistically is an action that is motivated out of self-interest (e.g., Jones' interest to act in order to benefit Smith is an interest Jones has, therefore it is not altruistic). The problem with this deterministic line of reasoning is that it confuses having certain interests on the one hand, and putting oneself at the center of such interests on the other. No doubt, humans can put the interests of others before one's own. Moreover, while altruistic perspectives are an expression of one's interests (i.e. mind-dependent), such does not entail that one's own interests are at the center of such judgments, expressions and choices. I contend that the same reasoning applies to anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism; while both metaethical standpoints are anthropogenic, such anthropogenesis does not entail that humans are 'the crown of creation' and that we are morally superior. Notwithstading this general criticism, I am not convinced that non-anthropocentric perspectives are unnatural for the reason Murdy categorically affirms,

[179] See Joel Feinberg. "Psychological Egoism." In *Reason & Responsibility: Readings in Some Basic Problems of Philosophy*, edited by Joel Feinberg and Russ Shafer-Landau, (California: Thomson Wadsworth, 2008.) pp. 520-532

mainly all earthly beings are speciocentric. For starters, while the concept 'arachnocentric' makes sense to us because we have the capacity to think in the abstract, *sub specie aeternitatis*, and recognize the existence of whole species, Murdy fails to demonstrate that this is a capacity shared by spiders, or any other non-human species for that matter. To borrow language from Dōgen, Murdy seems to assume that our anthropogenic interpretation of phenomenal beings, including spiders, reveals all that there is to know whereby nothing remains concealed. Notwithstanding the fact that spiders have individual interests, it is an epistemic leap to conclude that the presence of individual interests reveals speciocentricism.

Indeed, anthropocentrism is a speciocentric philosophy; thus non-anthropocentric theories of value simply contend that this is an egoistic and chauvinistic moral outlook, similar to sexism or racism, yet at the 'whole-species-level.' While anti-anthropocentric philosophies are anti-speciocentric, this is not, as Murdy believes, unnatural. If nature includes the myriad capacities that various species exhibit, then the capacity to think non-anthropocentrically is very much part of nature. Moreover, since one only needs to find one instance that contradicts the categorical word 'all' in order to reject any categorical premise, I contend that since there have been a number of human individuals, including Dōgen and Nietzsche, that have not affirmed a speciocentric perspective, Murdy's major premise that 'all earthly beings are speciocentric' is not an acceptable premise.[180]

While I do agree with Murdy that anthropocentric values and concerns can motivate humans to take action against environmental degradation and climate change, I am not convinced that it is an effective approach for setting the metaethical stage for doing applied ethics, vis-à-vis the environment. Despite the many warnings that continue to echo since Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring (1962)*, the majority of humanity continues to anthropocentrically double down on its consumptive and wasteful way of life with little regard for the more-than-human-world. Recently, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy

[180] My reconstruction of Murdy's argument against anti-anthropocentric perspectives is as follows:
P1. All earthly beings are speciocentric.
P2. Humans are an earthly being.
C: Ergo, Humans are speciocentric (i.e. anthropocentric).

Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) has reported that around one million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction over the next two decades. The loss of biodiversity at this level is greater than at any other time in human history. According to the IPBES, while the data is existentially concerning, there is room for hope; we can make a difference, and help prevent this massive dieback of biodiversity. However, action needs to be taken at both local and global levels, specifically in regards to economic and environmental policy.[181] The IPBES highlights five areas in which we need to begin making drastic changes: (1) land and sea use; (2) exploitation of organisms; (3) climate change; (4) pollution; and (5) invasive alien species. Notwithstanding their assessment and recommendations, I do believe we need to go even deeper; we need to completely rethink our general attitude and perspective of humankind, and our relationship to the more-than-human-world. In other words, how we use the land, and the ways we exploit animals etc. are a manifestation of a particular ideology that maintains the inherent importance of humankind over that of non-human species and beings (i.e. anthropocentrism). To try and change our behavior without rethinking and overcoming our perspectives seems dubious; and, to think that we can rely upon science to innovate our way out of this crisis without realizing a radical shift in our consumptive lifestyles would be nothing other than an anchor bias grounded in ascetic ideals. After all, the IPBES report is not entirely surprising as there have been many reports and warning signs highlighting the connection between contemporary human behavior/lifestyles and environmental degradation. Why have we continued to double down on natural resource exploitation and overconsumption, despite the ecological destruction and pollution we know we are causing? In what follows I will argue that the answer is anthropocentrism.

In his essay, "The Historical Roots of the Ecological Crisis*"* (1967), Lynn White Jr. maintains that we can trace the origins of the ecological crisis back to Judeo-Christianity. His basic argument is:

P1. Anthropocentrism is the primary cause of the ecological crisis.

[181] "Global Assessment Report on Biodiveristy and Ecosystem Services," IPBES, accessed June 5, 2020, https://ipbes.net/global-assessment.

P2. Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion/world-view.

C. Therefore Christianity is the primary cause of the ecological crisis.

It is not my goal to defend or challenge White's conclusion, for to do such would take us beyond the scope of this chapter. Rather, I would like to advance an argument that is similar to White's in order to bring Dōgen and Nietzsche into the fold of White's subsequent reflections concerning our ability to overcome the ecological crisis. The argument I shall present proceeds by acknowledging (P1) of White's argument as an acceptable premise, yet avoids in singling out Christianity as the culprit as he does in (P2).

P1. Anthropocentrism is the primary cause of the ecological crisis.

P2. Transcendentalism is the most anthropocentric world-view.

C. Therefore, transcendentalism is the primary cause of the ecological crisis.

Thus I contend that the cause of anthropocentrism results from a more general philosophy of transcendentalism, which is embedded in Christianity.

What is transcendentalism? According to E.D. Klemke, transcendentalism is an amalgamation of three theses:

(1) There exists a transcendent being or ultimate with which man can enter into some sort of relation.

(2) Without such a transcendent ultimate, and the relation of faith to it, human life lacks meaning, purpose and integration.

(3) Without such meaning or integration, human life is not worthwhile. (Klemke 2008, 188).

Now, before addressing the transcendentalist perspective on the meaning of life from a Zen/Nietzschean vantage point, it is important to explain why transcendentalism gives rise to anthropocentrism, and why anthropocentrism is responsible for the ecological crisis we are currently realizing. First, since the meaning of life is conferred upon us by a transcendent being, many view themselves, as evidenced in the sacred books of religious traditions that champion transcendentalism, with a sense of metaphysical privilege and entitlement; they view themselves as being created in God's image, as being the crown of creation, and as having dominion over all other beings. Herein, the anthropocentric perspective that

transcendentalism conditions exists as an amalgamation of different cognitive biases – psychological impulses that cause people to unconsciously draw conclusions about any given topic and without sufficient evidence – including: (1) egocentric bias; (2) self-interest bias; (3) story-fitting bias; and (4) anchoring bias. As an amalgamation of different cognitive biases, the unconscious belief in our cosmic importance within the greater narrative of transcendent meaning is largely responsible for the current ecological crisis.

Going back to the beginning of the modern period and the 'utopian vison' of Francis Bacon, this cognitive bias has motivated the unrelenting drive to 'control nature,' thereby engendering anthropocentric theories, such as Descartes' philosophy that 'all animals are machines.' And, following the marriage of science and technology, as well as the birth of industrial manufacturing and capitalism, anthropocentrism has transformed the world's ecosystems and atmosphere in such a way that the future of humanity is at stake. Indeed, anthropocentrism is all too sinister; even in the face of pollution, natural resource depletion, species extinction, and climate change, humanity continues to anthropocentrically double down on a business as usual trajectory. Why are they doubling down? Well, perhaps it is because the majority of the world's population who believe in some version of transcendentalism remain confident that everything will work out in the end. After all, the ways of the transcendent are greater than what we can fathom; and, while some environmental problems might be concerning, the destruction of this world is not a first order concern due to the fact that eschatology and an after-life fit into transcendental life-narratives. Now, at this point it is important to note that I do not believe that simply denying the tenability of the three theses of transcendentalism will cause one to begin taking measures to overcome their consumptive ways of living. Indeed, there certainly are people who don't subscribe to the three theses of transcendentalism, and who are vexed by environmental problems, yet nevertheless do not attempt to change the drum beat of our ecologically destructive march. Their situation is perplexing, and, no doubt, teetering on the edge of absurdity, mainly because for one to be vexed about ecological problems, yet not take any measures to change those problems, which would include one's consumptive

habits and life-style, evidences a clear discrepancy between one's aspirations/attitudinal leanings (i.e. desiring a cleaner planet) and one's actions so to realize those desires.[182] In addition to absurdity, this existential state is, as Nietzsche would likely maintain, passively nihilistic.

Both Dōgen's and Nietzsche's way-seeking philosophies can be properly characterized as 'non-transcendentalist.' In regards to Dōgen, as already quoted in the introduction of this dissertation from *Genjō Kōan*: "To learn the Buddha's truth is to learn ourselves. To learn ourselves is to forget ourselves. To forget ourselves is to be experienced by the myriad dharmas. To be experienced by the myriad dharmas is to let our own body-and-mind, and the body-and-mind of the external world, fall away" (Dōgen 1994, 34). In other words, the realization of Buddha-nature is neither beyond nor transcendent from the everyday world of this 'Great Earth.' And, throughout Nietzsche's literary works, one will encounter his critique of "transcendentalism," vis-à-vis Christianity, which thereby sets the stage for a philosophy of meaning that is born out from and imminent with, via metamorphosis, the earth. For example, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche writes:

> Behold, I teach you the overman. The overman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: the overman shall be the meaning of the earth! I beseech you my brothers, remain faithful to the earth, and do not believe those who speak to you of other worldly hopes! Poison-mixers are they, decaying and poisoned themselves, of whom the earth is weary: so let them go. (Nietzsche 1954, 125)

For Nietzsche, to overcome transcendentalism and thus live as a 'free-spirit,' one shall begin by saying yes to life on the horizon of the eternal recurrence of the same. "Amor fati: let that henceforth be my love!... And all in all, to sum up: I wish to be at any time hereafter only a yea-sayer!" (Nietzsche 1954, 213).

[182] Joel Feinberg shines comedic light on this existential state of absurdity, a state whereby one actively takes steps to frustrate their desires, with the following tale: "the tale is told of a workman who opens his lunch pail every noon, examines his sandwiches, and comments; 'Ugh, tuna fish again.' Finally, after weeks of witnessing this ritual, a fellow worker asks, 'Why don't you have your wife make you some other kind of sandwich?' to which the worker replies, 'Oh, I'm not married. I make my own lunches' (Feinberg 2018, 153). What makes this tale funny is that, assuming the worker is not cognitively impaired, he knowingly takes steps to frustrate his own desires. With all of the data available in regards to environmental degradation, for one to be aware and vexed by such and not attempt to make a change is roughly equivalent to the worker who frustrates himself by making sandwiches he does not like.

In addition to characterizing Dōgen and Nietzsche as anti-transcendentalist, I want to treat three related themes that are salient to their 'way seeking' philosophies: *perspectivism, passion, play*. Rather than anchoring our conception of meaning to some "transcendent" being/principle, a 'this worldly perspectivism,' fueled by the passions, and a flow of playfulness that molds and shapes our projects and livelihoods, is sufficient for living well. This does not mean that those who do champion this criterion will view the world non-anthropocentrically. However, if one's world-view is not grounded in a transcendentalist conception of meaning, then one's perspective will not be psychologically anchored to anthropocentrism, thus making it possible for "way-seekers" to cultivate their moral imagination, vis-à-vis active nihilism, in order to overcome human-centeredness, and thereby include the more-than-human world within their way-seeking-journey of perspectivism, passion and play.

Indeed, this is where we realize the value of reading Dōgen and Nietzsche in dialogue together: they provide a source of inspiration for overcoming our anthropocentric cognitive blinders. As White writes, "What we do about ecology depends on our ideas of the man-nature relationship. More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecological crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one" (White 2013, 10). That being said, White does not think Zen Buddhism is a possible alternative to the transcendentalism of Christianity, mainly because Zen, "is as deeply conditioned by Asian history as Christianity is by the experience of the West" (White 2013, 10).

I disagree with White's position; I do think that Zen Buddhism, particularly Dōgen's perspectivism, can open up a non-anthropocentric, nondualistic conception of man-nature relationship for Western audiences to practice. While Dōgen is a difficult thinker to make sense of, even for academic audiences who are well versed in Buddhism and East Asian philosophies, his practice of words and letters are readily accessible, through new translations and commentaries, for those willing to invest their 'being-time.' And, when we read Dōgen in dialogue with thinkers such as Nietzsche, we come to realize that his practice of words and letters goes beyond the dualistic distinctions between Western and Eastern cultural histories and identities. Together, Dōgen and Nietzsche open up, on the stage of world philosophy, new

vantage points for viewing the man-nature relationship, specifically in regards to perspectivism, passion and play, which we will now turn.

§7.6 Non-Anthropocentric Value Creation: Perspectivism, Passion & Play

The non-anthropocentric vantage points that Dōgen and Nietzsche share ascends from their perspectivism. Beginning with Dōgen, his *Sansui-kyō*, "Mountains and Waters Sutra," is a touchstone for making sense of his non-anthropocentric perspective. While there are many fascicles throughout the *Shōbōgenzō* that also express non-anthropocentric value commitments, *Sansui-kyō* reveals Dōgen's practice of doing philosophy to be a practice of self-overcoming. As Parkes explains, "Dōgen says that viewing the world from the usual anthropocentric standpoint is like looking through a bamboo tube at the corner of the sky. For a fuller experience, he recommends entertaining the perspectives of other beings, such as mountains, drops of water, celestial beings, hungry ghosts, dragons and fish" (Parkes 2009, 86). For example, consider the following passage whereby he overturns our anthropocentric view of mountains, a view that regards such as an insentient being inherently distinct from humanity:[183]

> Mountains do not lack the qualities of mountains. Therefore they always abide in ease and always walk. You should examine in detail this quality of the mountains walking. Mountains' walking is just like human walking. Accordingly, do not doubt mountains' walking even though it does not look the same as human walking. The Buddha ancestors' words point to walking. This is fundamental understanding. You should penetrate these words. (Dōgen 2009, 87).

[183] As I noted in Chapter three, Dōgen's non-anthropocentric perspective is part of a general philosophy of nature which other Japanese Buddhists affirmed, including Saichō (767-822) and Kūkai (774-835). As Jacqueline Stone explains, this philosophy of nature has roots planted within Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism; "Tao-sheng (d. 434), disciple of the great translator Kumārajīva, argued that Buddha-nature is inherent even in the *icchantika*, people of incorrigible disbelief who lack the aspiration for enlightenment; Chi-tsang (549-623) of the San-lun school argued that insentient beings have the Buddha-nature as well. […] However, even among those Chinese Buddhists who upheld the possibility of the realization of Buddhahood by insentient beings, this was thought to depend on the realization of Buddhahood by sentient beings: because self and the outer world are nondual, when the practitioner manifests Buddhahood, so will that person's environment" (Stone 1999, 29). Thus, Dōgen's non-anthropocentrism is not different in kind from his Japanese and Chinese Buddhist predecessors; nor is it different in kind from Theravāda Buddhists who consider trees, plants and seeds as borderline cases vis-à-vis sentience, as Lambert Schmithausen's research shows. That being said, I contend that Dōgen's non-anthropocentric perspective is unique in that he does not believe that an insentient being's realization of Buddha-nature is solely dependent upon a sentient being's realization of such. For Dōgen, not only do insentient beings, such as mountains and waters, realize Buddha-nature on their own, but they can condition awakening and realization within the perspectives of sentient beings.

According to Parkes, Dōgen's Zen is a practice of overcoming "our unexamined prejudices and conventional modes of experience," so that, "we can come to appreciate the natural world as the actualization of the Buddha Way" (Parkes 2009, 85). However, as Parkes notes, not only are natural phenomena such as mountains, waters, plants and stones a "locus of enlightenment but also sources of wisdom and companions on the Buddha Way;" and so, "if we wantonly destroy them for our benefit, we actually thereby diminish our own opportunities for fulfillment" (Parkes 2009, 86). Thus it is through this 'earth-*sangha* perspectivism' that all beings within the natural world are realized as 'fellow travelers' along the 'Way,' which in turn attunes our perspectives to feel a deeper sense of moral responsibility, vis-à-vis care, for the more-than-human-world.

Dōgen's non-anthropocentric sentiments can be extended to rivers, streams and droplets of water as well; "It is not only that there is water in the world, but there is a world in water. It is not just in water. There is also a world of sentient beings in clouds" (Parkes 2009; 91). From a contemporary anthropocentric perspective, rivers, lakes and oceans exist in either two ways: (1) as a resource to fuel our consumptive lives; or (2) as sink for disposing and flushing refuse.[184] In other words, water is here to serve our needs for drinking, food, energy, recreation and waste disposal. This does not mean that those who affirm anthropocentrism cannot value nature intrinsically.[185] As Dale Jamieson states, "An anthropocentrist or sentientist can value forests, mountains, jungles and wild rivers. […] The richness and complexity of an evaluational structure do not depend solely on whether one is an anthropocentrist, sentientist, biocentrist, ecocentrist, or whatever. They also depend enormously on one's experience of the world and what values one recognizes" (Jamieson 2008, 155).[186] That being said, I contend that the intrinsic value an anthropocentirst believes nature to possess is contingent upon human interests, and

[184] My characterization of anthropocentric conceptions of nature, vis-à-vis nature as a 'source' and as a 'sink' is borrowed from Dale Jamieson's *Ethics and the Environment: An Introduction* (2009).
[185] Dale Jamieson identifies four senses of intrinsic value. They include: "(1) intrinsic value as ultimate value; (2) intrinsic value as moral considerability; (3) intrinsic value as inherent value; and (4) intrinsic value as independence from valuers" (Jamieson 2009, 154).
[186] I share Jamieson's contention, mainly because values are anthropogenic.

oriented around human narratives that have overriding authority, vis-à-vis axiology. Indeed, the crassness of anthropocentrism has karmic consequences that ought not be ignored; our failure to include water as a moral companion within our web of beliefs only diminishes our ability to flourish and thereby realize the Buddha-dharma. As Dōgen writes in *Keisei-sanshiki*, "Voices of the Valleys, Forms of the Mountains," "The voices of the river valley are the Wide and Long Tongue, the forms of the mountains are nothing other than his pure body" (Dōgen 1994, 86).[187]

Similar to *Sansui-kyō*, the fascicle *Mujō Seppō, "*Insentient Beings Preach the Dharma," is another textual example that evidences non-anthropocentric value creation in Dōgen's philosophy. For example, Dōgen writes that when it comes to hearing the dharma preached by insentient beings, we ought not assume that preaching must always conform to our sentient biases and anthropocentric values; "We should not learn that the manner in which the insentient preach the Dharma must necessarily be as in the case of the sentient" (Dōgen 1994, 115). From an anthropocentric perspective, when we hear the phrase "insentient beings preaching the dharma," one is tempted to think that "the rustling trees in the forest, and the opening and falling of leaves and flowers, are the non-emotional beings preaching the dharma" (Dōgen 1994, 115). When it comes to listening to insentient/non-emotional beings preaching the dharma, such is heard, not through our ears, but rather through our eyes; "When we learn in practice the founding Patriarch's words *hearing sound through the eyes*, the place where the sound of the non-emotional preaching the Dharma is heard is the eyes themselves; and the place where the sound of the non-emotional preaching the Dharma is realized, is the eyes themselves" (Dōgen 1994, 122). Through our embodied experience of *zazen* as non-thinking (Jpn. *hishiryō*), one realizes there is no essential dualism between man and nature, between sentient and insentient. This point is well presented in his fascicle, *Hotsu-Mujoshin*, "The Establishment of the Will to the Supreme:"

> What is described here as "the mind" is the mind as it is. It is the mind as the whole Earth. Therefore it is the mind as self-and-others. The mind in every instance – the mind of a person of the whole earth, of a Buddhist patriarch of the whole Universe in the ten directions, and of gods,

[187] In Sartrean terms, if we simply treat water as a being-in-itself, rather than a being-for-itself, then we will be cutting ourselves off from the Great Earth's omnipresent chanting of the Buddha-dharma.

> dragons, and so on – is trees and stones, beyond which there is no mind at all. These trees and stones are naturally unrestricted by limitations such as "existence," "non-existence," "emptiness," and "matter." With this mind of trees and stones we establish the [bodhi-]mind and realize practice-and-experience – for the mind is trees and the mind is stones. By virtue of this trees as mind and stones as mind, thinking here and now about the concrete state of not thinking is realized. (Dōgen 1994, 254).

Thus, as Dōgen expresses in other fascicles, "all beings are themselves Buddha-nature."

Dōgen's conception of Buddha Nature is "the "entirety of being," for the "Total Existence is the buddha nature" (Dōgen 1994, 2); and, in the context of value creation, Dōgen's conception of Buddha-nature is in keeping with both Saichō and Kūkai as they all stand on the same non-anthropocentric platform.[188] However, what is novel about Dōgen's practice of non-anthropocentric value creation, vis-à-vis Buddha-nature, is the embodied practice of *zazen* as "the Buddha-nature's equal practice" (Jpn. *busshō togaku*). For example, consider the following passage from *Busshō*: "The point of this equal practice of balanced wisdom is not that as long as the practice of balance does not hinder the practice of wisdom there is clear realization of the Buddha-nature in their equal practice. [The point is that] in the state of clearly realizing the Buddha-nature there is practice which is the equal practice of balance and wisdom" (Dōgen 1994, 25). Thus, I contend that non-anthropocentric value creation as the realization of Buddha-nature is Dōgen's affirmative response to overcoming nihilism, vis-à-vis time. In other words, rather than temporality and impermanence robbing us of value and meaning, as Schopenhauer's passive nihilism maintains, they are nothing other than Buddha-nature. For Dōgen, because all beings are the embodiment of Buddha-nature, and because all beings are impermanent, it follows that impermanence is Buddha-nature; "The sixth patriarch preaches to disciple Gyosho, 'That without constancy is the Buddha nature" (Dōgen 1994, 13). And, in the context of metaethics, Dōgen states, "That which has constancy is the mind that divides all dharmas into good and bad" (Dōgen 1994, 13). As I interpret Dōgen, Buddha-nature cannot be realized by thinking about good or bad; in fact, the realization of Buddha-nature is the

[188] According to Parkes, the phrase "Buddha-nature of trees and rocks*"* (Jpn. *mokuseki busshō*) has been salient to Japanese Buddhist thought since Saichō (766-822), the founder of the *Tendai* school and is contemporary Kūkai (774-835), the founder of *Shingon* Buddhism (Parkes 1997).

self-overcoming of absolute distinctions between good and bad, right and wrong. And, to echo our examination of karma in chapters five and six, according to Dōgen, the realization of Buddha-nature is not contingent upon karma; "object-and-subject as living beings-and-Total-Existence is completely beyond ability based on karmic accumulation, beyond the random occurrence of circumstances" (Dōgen 1994, 2).

Let us turn to Nietzsche now. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is, like Dōgen's *Sansui-kyō*, a touchstone for understanding Nietzsche's non-anthropocentric perspectivism. It is a touchstone not because Nietzsche wrote this masterpiece while walking the mountains of Sils Maria, nor because the main character, Zarathustra, lives in the mountains with his serpent and eagle and spends his time speaking to the more-than-human-world. Rather, it is Zarathustra's message "be faithful to the meaning of the earth," a message that is the pivot for our self-overcoming, and thus realizing the *Űbermensch*. "Once the sin against God was the greatest sin; but God died, and these sinners died with him. To sin against the earth is now the most dreadful thing, and to esteem the entrails of the unknowable higher than the meaning of the earth" (Nietzsche 1954, 125).

It is important to note that the practice of realizing the overman via terra-faith is, like the cycles of the earth, non-teleological. Indeed, there is a Sisyphean quality that is part of perpetual self-overcoming, particularly when framed on the horizon of Nietzsche's eternal recurrence of the same. However, that does not undermine our ability to celebrate this very life. Just as we can celebrate the changing of the seasons while recognizing there is no final teleological finish line that the earth crosses, we can celebrate our situation as beings that are always in the process of becoming. And, while the process may be painfully arduous, as if we are pushing boulders up mountains, we ought not to despair. The *Űbermensch*, while never realized in a fixed cognitive sense, but instead, embodied as "way-seeking" grace and flow, is the kind of being that says yes to this life and does not desire a transcendent world/afterlife, as Christianity does, nor the annihilation of this very life itself, as early Buddhist

conceptions of *nirvāṇa* are presented. Indeed, the philosophical parallels between Nietzsche and Mahāyāna Buddhism in general, Zen in particular, reflect this life affirming perspective.

The *bodhisattva*, vowing to save all sentient beings, knowing that there are no sentient beings to be saved, all the while recognizing that this vow entails the life-long career of innumerable rebirths, embodies the same logical conditions as Nietzsche's "overman," mainly endless toil, that comes to nothing (i.e. non-teleological). Indeed, these conditions provide the general logical pattern of our planetary ecosystems: endless processes that come to nothing. Thus, Zarathustra's message of "be faithful to the earth" is nothing other than one becoming, in a non-anthropocentric way, what one is. We too, are of the earth; the mountains and waters and all phenomenal things are ourselves vis-à-vis the same existential predicament. The embodied cyclic pulse and patterns of all beings are creatively woven into a collective narrative of endless toil that comes to no end or goal; a narrative that is succinctly expressed in the Zen capping phrase, "Work hard and accomplish nothing," (Jpn. *Rō shite kō nashi*) (ZS 4.668).

In addition to perspectivism, the embodied passions in both Dōgen and Nietzsche provide a horizon for attuning ourselves to the more-than-human world. Continuing with Nietzsche, his notion of the will to power refers to what ultimately underlies the passions, and it is that which propels all organisms to passionately will themselves to live. The creative expressions of will-to-power, according to Nietzsche, is evidenced in the organic processes of all life forms. For example, in *The Will to Power* Nietzsche writes:

> Greater complexity, sharp differentiation, the contiguity of developed organs and functions with the disappearance of the intermediate members – if that is perfection, then there is a will to power in the organic process in virtue of which dominant, shaping, commanding forces continually extend their bounds of their power and continually simplify within these bounds: the interpretive growths. (Nietzsche 1968, 342)

Or again in a similar passage, he states that biological concepts like species preservation is nothing other than a more basic drive, a more basic force and/or will-to-power: "Physiologists should think again before positing the "instinct of preservation" as the cardinal drive in organic creature. A living thing wants above all to discharge its force: 'preservation' is only a consequence of this" (Nietzsche 1968, 344). This

basic drive which defines all life forms, as well as inorganic phenomena at the atomic level, is reflected in basic organismic drives such as hunger:

> One cannot ascribe the most basic and primeval activities of protoplasm to a will to self-preservation, for it takes into itself absurdly more than would be required to preserve it; and, above all, it does not thereby "preserve itself," it falls apart – The drive that rules here has to explain precisely this absence of desire for self-preservation: "hunger" is an interpretation based on far more complicated organisms (- hunger is a specialized and later form of the drive, an expression of a division of labor in the service of a higher drive that rules over it). (Nietzsche 1968, 345)

> It is not possible to take hunger as the primum mobile, any more than self preservation. To understand hunger as a consequence of undernourishment means: hunger as the consequence of a will to power that no longer achieves mastery. It is a by no means a question of replacing a loss – only later, as a result of the division of labor, after the will to power has learned to take other roads to its satisfaction, is an organism's need to appropriate reduced hunger, to the need to replace what has been lost. (Nietzsche 1968, 345)

Thus the will-to-power is not a privileged mode of being for humans alone; rather, all living beings partake in the dynamic evolution and expression of both exploitative and adaptive forces that allow beings to flourish. Accordingly, it follows that Nietzsche's philosophy of value-creation, which is an offshoot of the will to power, is non-anthropocentric. To live in a way that is "true and faithful to the earth" is to recognize that our drives, appetites and aspirations (i.e. the passions) are not the teleological crown of creation, but rather expressions of a nondual biological process in which all beings partake. As Van der Braak states, "Will to power is Nietzsche's new conception of nature without the dualistic oppositions of subject and object, knower and known, epistemology and ontology. Instead, will to power conceives all of nature engaged in active interpretation" (Van der Braak 2011, 64).

Similar to Nietzsche, in Dōgen's Zen, the body and the passions are central for practice-realization; from the vantage point of Dōgen's "way-seeking" philosophy, the body is inextricably tied to, as we saw in the previous chapter, the practice of *zazen*. "In *zazen*, a situation is created in which the drives cultivate themselves…*Zazen* facilitates an attitude where the conscious mental process can take a step back, and the body can dominate the mind" (Van der Braak 2011, 76). For Dōgen, there is no metaphysical divide between mind and body; instead, they are fundamentally nondual (Jpn. *shinjin*

ichinyō); again, from *Hotsu-Mujoshin*, "In the [oneness of] body-and-mind, the *bodhi*-mind is being established further" (Dōgen 1994, 256). Through the practice of *zazen*, realization of Buddha-nature via dropping-off body-and-mind (Jpn. *shinjin datsuraku*) "is the result of a particular configuration of bodily drives" (Van der Braak 2011, 76). Herein, the embodied realization of Buddha-nature via *zazen* and the practice of non-thinking give rise to a new, heightened perspective that overturns anthropocentric thinking proper, and advances a practice that is, as we noted in the previous chapter, free from dualistic conceptions of agent and actions, or intentions and consequences. The realization of Buddha-nature is inextricably tied to the practice of non-doing (Ch. *wu-wei*), or without committing (Jpn. *makusa*). As we will see below, non-doing is salient to the embodiment of play; however, before we examine such, it is important to explain further just how pivotal non-anthropocentrism is for making sense of Dōgen's metaethical perspective, as well as for understanding the embodied impact his writings can have upon his audience.

In his article, "Walking with Mountains, or What *Shōbōgenzō* and Dōgen Mean to Me," Glen Mazis examines Dōgen's non-anthropocentric perspective, vis-à-vis thinking, as a way to address what he believes would be Dōgen's view of contemporary society, and its deluded conception of material bodies in general, human embodiment in particular. According to Mazis:

> The Dharma is taught by all things, because we are embodied beings, and they can speak to us directly through our senses and bodies made of the same coming together of things. Yet this dharma teaching or radiation of Buddha-nature is not recognized by us in our clouded state of body-mind, because we see grass, trees, soil, fences, and walls as "objects." Our culture insists on the idea articulated by Descartes that objects are beings we experience as resistant to us since they are self-subsistent beings encountered by self-subsistent, perceiving self…When we practice zazen, we see more clearly this tragic falling away from who we are in our dominant culture's advertisements and endless projects to master and gain, and in how it leads us to consume always to achieve status, while in doing so we relinquish the ongoing nourishment of the senses that are cleared from [what] Dōgen calls the "flowering in the air" or the "walking mountains." (Mazis 2016, 55)

Herein, Mazis provides a comparative bridge to Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, whereby the Cartesian separation between body and mind (i.e. self) is overturned with a non-dual perspective of the body-and-mind: "Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother, there stands a mighty ruler, an unknown

sage – whose name is self. In your body he dwells; he is your body" (Nietzsche 1954, 146). Based upon this perspective of the body, Nietzsche recognizes that thinking is not an ontic quality that is unique to humans; rather, similar to Dōgen's non-anthropocentric perspective, Nietzsche's *The Joyous Science* includes the more-than-human world within the 'architecture of thinking:'

> The time is past when the Church possessed the monopoly of reflection, when the *vita contemplativa* had always in the first place to be the vita religiosa…I know not how we could content ourselves with their structures, even if they should be divested of their ecclesiastical purposes: these structures speak far too pathetic and too biased speech, as houses of God and places of splendor for supernatural intercourse, for us godless ones to be able to think our thoughts in them. We want to have ourselves translated into stone and plant, we want to go for a walk in ourselves when we wander these halls and gardens. (Nietzsche 2018, 180)

Thus it is on the horizon of our embodied passions that both Dōgen and Nietzsche, in dialogue together, can help attune contemporary society that has become divorced from their embodied existence. As Mazis poignantly states:

> Mistaken ideas about the body can be witnessed within our culture emerging in the problems of compulsive material consumption; an epidemic of obesity, spreading addictions to alienated sex, drugs, alcohol, the internet, frenzied entertainment, and other distracting activity; child abuse, elder abuse, animal abuse, and so on – in a long and saddening list of social ills that testify to clouded perception arising from mistreated and misunderstood embodiment. (Mazis 2016, 54)

No doubt, when we observe the impact Covid-19 has made upon the global community in general, American society in particular, Mazis' point about misunderstood embodiment could not be more accurate. Covid-19 has revealed a great deal about the embodied health of America's individual citizens, constitutional democracy, and socio-economic policies (e.g., a for profit health-care system and insurance market). Indeed, I cannot think of a better time for American society to follow Dōgen's instructions and invest their 'being-time' into just sitting, practicing non-thinking, turning back the radiance, and dropping-off their minds-and-bodies so to faithfully reconnect themselves to the meaning of the 'Great Earth.' Indeed, 'just sitting' should be part of our survival guide during this pandemic as it is a practice that inherently embraces 'shelter in place' and 'social distancing' protocols. Such a practice is not only prudent when considering the ethics of public health, but it just might help foster a reevaluation of 'invisible hand' ideologies so as to create new values.

Finally, through our embodied passions, practitioners of a Dōgen-Nietzschean-way-seeking-philosophy can go beyond the need for 'ultimate meaning' through a creative spirit and the embodied flow of "play" (i.e. creativity-art-work). This comparative horizon is well identified by Van der Braak in the chapter, "The Child," from *Nietzsche and Zen.* However, before we explore this last comparative horizon, an analysis of the significance of play for realizing non-transcendent meaning deserves some reflection.

The metaethical significance of play is cogently presented in Moritz Schlick's essay, "On the Meaning of Life;" in it, he defends 'play', vis-à-vis a spirit of youthfulness, as a how-to, way-seeking answer to the question of life's meaning. His defense, which is in direct response to the pessimist's challenge that all life is meaningless and vain (i.e. Schopenhauer), finds its foothold in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*[189]. According to Schlick, "life means movement and action, and if we wish to find a meaning in it we must seek for activities which carry their own purpose and value them, independently of any extraneous goals" (Schlick 2018, 64). Play is a mode of engagement that meets this criterion of meaning. When we are engaged in activities of play, there is no ultimate division between means and ends. Play, as Schlick states, is an activity which takes place entirely for its own sake, independently of its effects and consequences (Schlick 2018). And, while 'youth' is often erroneously equivocated with age, particularly childishness, according to Schlick youth is, in contrast with those who are "teleologically serious and work-minded," nothing other than "devotion to the deed, not the goal" (Schlick 2018, 69). Thus, the youthful spirit, engaged in creative projects and playful activities, is able to realize, joy.

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche advocates for three of the existential ingredients that Schlick highlights for realizing meaningfulness: (1) youth; (2) play; (3) joy. Beginning with (1), the

[189] While Schlick is affiliated with the Vienna school of logical positivism rather than a scholar of Nietzsche, his standpoint on the question of life's meaning is constructed out of Nietzsche's philosophy. In regards to Schopenhauer's pessimism, which is itself a passive nihilism, according to Schlick, "We know how Nietzsche, for example, sought to conquer this pessimism…Nietzsche, the Nietzsche of Zarathustra, saw the meaning of life. For if it be said that henceforth the ultimate value of life, to him, was life itself, that obviously says nothing clear and does not find right expression for the deep truth which he then perceived or at least suspected. For he saw that life has no meaning, so long as it stands wholly under the domination of purposes" (Schlick 2018, 57).

image of the "child" as the third and final metamorphosis of the spirit clearly stands out. Having overcome the transformational stages of the camel and the lion, the child metaphorically represents a youthful spirit whose mode-of-being involves: "forgetting oneself, innocence, play and a sacred Yes" (Van der Braak 2011, 127); "The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred "Yes." For the game of creation, my brothers, a sacred "Yes" is needed: the spirit now wills his own will, and he who had been lost to the world now conquers his own world" (Nietzsche 1954, 139). Herein, perhaps the embodied expressions of dance and laughter best captures the comportment and disposition of the youthful 'child-spirit.' For example, in the fourth part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Nietzsche writes:

> You higher men, the worst about you is that all of you have not learned to dance as one must dance – dancing away over yourselves! What does it matter that you are failures? How much is still possible! So learn to laugh away over yourselves! Lift up your hearts, you good dancers, high, higher! And do not forget good laughter. This crown of him who laughs, this rose wreath crown: to you my brothers, I throw this crown. Laughter I have pronounced holy; you higher men, learn to laugh! (Nietzsche 1954, 407-408)

Becoming a child is again a Christian image from the New Testament, as Nietzsche was all too aware. However, rather than framing this image of the child in reference to the kingdom of heaven and Christian holiness, Nietzsche frames it both non-teleologically and non-anthropocentrically. As he states in the "Ass Festival," "To be sure: except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into that kingdom of heaven…But we have no wish whatever to enter into the kingdom of heaven: we have become men – *so we want the earth*" (Nietzsche 1954, 428). Wanting the earth, from the perspective of the child, is calibrated in light of his 'thought of thoughts', the eternal recurrence of the same. Thus, from the perspective of a 'child,' there is nothing beyond this life itself that is desirable. This earthly existence is itself sufficient and complete.

Nietzsche's notion of the eternal recurrence of the same provides the philosophical ingredients for understanding his philosophy of play. Similar to play, whereby the ends of our activities reside in the means itself, the eternal recurrence of the same provides, as we noted in Chapter one, a non-teleological

view of existence. From the perspective of the eternal recurrence of the same, the future is the past, and the past is the future, and will remain to be so for an eternity. Upon realizing this, and thereby saying "Yes" to our Sisyphean-like fate, vis-à-vis *amor fati*, the youthful character of the child becomes absorbed within the present moment of play. Now, we noted earlier that music is a touchstone for play, as the goal of music resides not at the end of a melody, but within the means of playing it; thus, from Nietzsche's perspective, music can be played by both musicians who perform, and the audience who listens and dances. Ultimately, it is the latter – the audience who listens and dances – that Nietzsche references as a paradigmatic example of being a child. The child is one who has heard the melody of the will to power flowing from the orchestra of the earth and through the audience; and, in so far as audience members have ears to hear, they immediately embody the melody through rhythmic dance. Just as the goal of playing a melody does not reside at the end of the melody, the goal of dancing, according to Nietzsche's Zarathustra, resides in the embodied, grace-infused motions of dancing itself.

> A man's stride betrays whether he has found his own way: behold me walking! But whoever approaches his goal dances. And verily, I have not become a statue: I do not yet stand there, stiff, stupid, stony, a column; I love to run swiftly. And though there are swamps and thick melancholy on earth, whoever has light feet runs even over mud and dances on swept ice. Lift up your hearts, my brothers, high, higher! And do not forget your legs either. Lift up your legs too, you good dancers; and better yet, stand on your heads. (Nietzsche 1954, 406)

Herein it is through the spirit of play, vis-à-vis dance, that one is able to realize embodied joy.

Just as the eternal recurrence of the same frames Nietzsche's philosophy of play, it affords us the opportunity to overcome suffering; our youthful spirit of play transforms, via reabsorption, our sorrows into moments of joy. Unlike happiness, joy is not teleological; rather, joy is the realization of the will to power flowing through us as we actively engage in projects of worth. Nietzsche's conception of joy finds its embodied distillation in the 'child,' which having realized its metamorphosis from a camel and lion, is in a perpetual state of becoming and overcoming.[190] Metaphorically, the youthful child represents all that

[190] Nietzsche introduces the three metamorphosis of spirit in the first speech in part I from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra.* "On its way to wisdom, the spirit first transforms into a camel, a strong weight-bearing spirit, in which reverence

is joyful, all that is, in a Nietzschean sense, a mixture of laughter and tears. The youthful child, that knows how to play, who takes risks and is willing to suffer in order to stretch their imagination and expand their perspectives, embodies an enthusiasm for life as eternal-joy.

As we turn our attention to Dōgen, it is important to note that the image of youth and the spirit of playfulness is ubiquitous within East Asian philosophies in general, particularly Daoism and Zen. In Daoism, we find the image of the child as a metaphor for possessing virtue: "One who possesses virtue in abundance is comparable to a new born babe" (Lao Tzu 1963, 62). Or, in Zen, the encounter dialogues (Jpn. *mondō*) between Zen masters, patriarchs and students are themselves playful language games whereby participants "use language in a manner that undercuts and transcends the recognized limits of language;" thus, in response to questions such as "does a dog have buddha-nature?", the ideal response strives to "make their point through demonstration rather than argument, and the ideal is to sustain a lively pace that does not tolerate self-conscious reflection or calculation" (Kraft 1991, 31). Within these philosophies, the logic of playfulness noted above is tied to non-action (Ch. *wu-wei*). Accordingly, while normative issues are matters we take seriously and are sincere about, they are also matters that can be joyfully engaging.

In addition to *mondō*, the aesthetic traditions of Zen, too, are glazed and fired with play (Jpn. *yuge*). This is particularly evidenced in the many aesthetic depictions of Hotei, who is popularly regarded as an incarnation of the *bodhisattva* Maitreya, Miroku. From the perspective of Zen practitioners, "The playfulness of Hotei is what allowed him to transcend such obstructions as the distinction of the transcendent realm of practice and the mundane world of the marketplace at the busy crossroads of the

dwells. […] In the desert, the camel transforms into a lion, who is able to defeat the dragon of "thou shalt" […] But even the lion is not capable of creating new values because it is too identified with its new found autonomy of 'I will.' […] Therefore the lion voluntarily let's go of its newfound autonomy, and, as Nietzsche puts it, 'goes under.' It literally overcomes itself and is transformed into a child" (Van der Braak 2011, 23). Now, it is either the case that the child is a teleological goal of self-overcoming, or not. If the former, then 'the child' would be an aberration to Nietzsche's general philosophical perspective, which is non-teleological. If the latter, then it follows that how one realizes oneself as a youthful spirit that embodies joy and play is something that will have to be overcome as well. I contend that a non-teleological conception of 'the child' is preferable; thus, self-overcoming is an ongoing task or project that desires nothing other than eternal playful-overcoming.

world, enabling him to reenter the world of *samsāra* and again participate freely in everyday social and political relations" (Parker 1999, 201). Accordingly, the spirit of play and playful transformation became salient, particularly during the *Muromachi* period, to aesthetic traditions including poetry, calligraphy and landscape paintings which defined the culture of the 'hermit at court.' For example, consider the role Hotei plays in the famous Ten Ox Herding Pictures. The pictures, which are accompanied by a poetic verse referencing a stage in Zen practice and the realization of Buddha-nature (i.e. finding the ox), conclude with an encounter with Hotei as one "Enters the marketplace with extended hands."

> With bare chest and feet, you come to the market.
> Under dirt and ash, your face breaks into a laugh.
> With no display of magic powers
> You make withered trees burst into flower. (Mumon 2004, 95)

Commenting on this verse in a series of lectures delivered at *Myoshin-ji*, master Mumon Roshi states:

> Hotei reveals everything and has nothing to hide. He needs no shirt; he needs no title. Exposing hairy chest down to his naval, barefoot he walks the streets of town or heads for the outskirts. Since people will be nervous if he shows he has attained satori, he does not reveal that he has mastered the discipline nor does he show any trace of learning. He just laughs like a great fool, daubed with dirt and covered with ashes. That laugh! How would you describe it? "Laughing fills your face." He laughs so hard you think that his jaw would fall off. People who come in contact with that laugh return to their original good nature and awaken to their budhhahood. Though he does not preach or lecture, everyone who sees his old monk's face is saved. (Mumon 2004, 100)

In Zen, Hotei represents all that is youthful, playful and joyful; no doubt, paralleling Nietzsche's message in *Zarathustra*: "I love him whose soul squanders itself, who wants no thanks and does not give back again: for he always bestows and would not preserve himself […] I love him whose soul is overfull so that he forgets himself, and all things are in him" (Nietzsche 1954, 127-128).

The spirit of playfulness in Dōgen is most explicitly revealed through his literary works and style of philosophizing. As we saw in Chapter five, his practice of words and letters is, according to Kim, framed in light of *kōan* and encounter dialogues between Zen masters. As Dōgen saw it, traditional perspectives on *kōan* were three-fold: (1) the instrumentalist view that *kōan* are a means for attaining

enlightenment; (2) "predilection for an intellectual and intuitive 'seeing into one's nature' (*kenshō*) as if 'seeing' and 'nature' were two different phenomena" (Kim 2004, 80-81); and (3) the assumption that *kōan* are, compared to other literary genres, irrational.

> In this view, the mind, confronted with *kōan*, or formulized nonsense, was systematically frustrated in its intellectual functions, and finally deconditioned so as to permit the release of the primitive psychic forces hitherto pent up in it, which was necessary for the experience of enlightenment. Such an instrumentalist view of *kōan* was closely related to the corollary view of reason in general and of language and symbols in particular, which was by and large negativistic. (Kim 2004, 81)

Through his practice of words and letters, which can be described as *genjō kōan*, Dōgen attempts to overcome traditionalist perspectives of *kōan* by realizing that words and letters are not, "things that the intellect manipulates abstractly and impersonally, but rather, things that work intimately in the existential metabolism of one who uses them philosophically and religiously in a special manner and with a special attitude" (Kim 2004, 88). Thus, by overcoming an instrumentalist perspective, Dōgen's practice of words and letters vis-à-vis *kōan*, "was to carefully and compassionately pursue the reason of non-sense, for *kōans* were not just ordinary nonsense or meaningless expressions, but symbols of life and death […] *kōans* functioned not only as nonsense that castigated reason, but as parables, allegories, and mysteries that unfold the horizons of existence before us. In this sense they were realized, though not solved" (Kim 2004, 80).

The playfulness of Dōgen's practice of words and letters is most explicitly evidenced, as I noted in Chapter five, in his transposition of lexical components, and the semantic reconstruction through syntactic change (Kim 2007). Beginning with transposition of lexical components, Dōgen frequently reshuffles such, vis-à-vis traditional Buddhist phrases and Zen verses, in order to show that the lexical components themselves, "are as dynamic and versatile as reality itself in their infinitely variegated configurations and possibilities (Kim 2007, 65). The famous Buddhist notion, "Mind itself is Buddha," is one such example whereby he explores the different arrangements by which the four lexical elements can be rearranged into twenty-four possible combinations (Kim 2007, 66). And, in regards to semantic

reconstruction through syntactic change, we find that Dōgen's technique is perhaps best evidenced in the fascicle *Busshō* whereby he transforms the traditional verse from the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, "All sentient beings without exception have Buddha-nature," into "All sentient beings, all existence, are Buddha nature" (Kim 2007, 67). As Kim explains, this playful spin on words and letters achieves two things. First, it overcomes the idea of Buddha-nature as a potentiality. Second, it overcomes a limited anthropocentric and biocentric conception of Buddha-nature so to include insentient beings, all existence for that matter, as Buddha-nature (Kim 2007, 67). Herein, such creative expressions (Jpn. *dōtoku*) attune us "to not only take into consideration semantic possibilities in metaphors, images, gestures, and moral and aesthetic activities in the human realm, but also those possibilities in the activities of nonhuman and nonliving realms" (Kim 2004, 83).

Less explicitly, two other components of Dōgen's practice of words and letters, his use of reflexive and self-causative utterances, as well as the upgrading of commonplace notions and using neglected metaphors, reveals the depth of playfulness as a nondual practice-realization of *kōan* literature. Beginning with the former, "In Zen the statement of identity is quite common place and frequently used in order to suggest the nonduality of equality and differentiation, of emptiness and form, and so on" (Kim 2007, 70). The logic for these statements is born out of a dialectical logic of identity and difference that is woven throughout the *Diamond Sūtra*: A is ~A, ∴ A is A. According to this logic, our conventional descriptions about the world are riddled with essentialism whereby delusion is distinct from realization. However, upon realizing that all things, because they are empty, are without an essential identity that distinguishes one thing from another, one concludes that there is neither delusion nor realization. Now, because this negation of conventional perspectives is itself a view, albeit a negative one, it can become something that one can reify and cling to. To overcome such, this first order negation is met by a second order negation via affirmation whereby the conventional world is restored, thereby preserving dualisms amidst their nondual nature.

This nondualistic play on words thus carries over another component of this philosophy of language, mainly his upgrading common place notions and using neglected metaphors. The word *kattō*, "entwined vines," is one example. Traditionally, *kattō* is a word that carries pejorative connotations, vis-à-vis passions, desires, language and theories. Metaphorically, the term evokes images of entanglement and bondage, thereby referencing one's entrapment within dualisms and delusion. Dōgen, however, "adopts this image to describe the type of communicative relationship between master and disciple," thereby suggesting, "that the very texture of the Buddha-dharma is comprised of passions and desires, conflicts and differences" (Kim 2007, 73).

Notwithstanding Dōgen's practice of words and letters, he also emphasizes the realization of the spirit of play, or 'wondrous activity,' within the everyday world of tasks and projects. This is evidenced in the fascicle *Jinzu*, "Mystical Power," whereby Dōgen cites the words of the Zen layperson Ho-on: "The mystical power and wondrous function, carrying water, lugging firewood" (Dōgen 1994, 75). Commenting on this verse, Dōgen down plays the popular characterization of mysticism and mystical power as cognitive/transcendent mode of seeing and understanding the world and ourselves. Rather, mystical power is a mode of non-thinking which we embody, via the passions, throughout our daily interactions, encounters and self-motivated/self-powered (Jpn. *jiriki*) projects and pursuits.

> Carrying water means loading water and fetching it. There being our own work and self-motivation, and there being the work of others and the motivation of others, water is caused to be carried. This is just the state of mystically powerful Buddha. We can say that knowing is Existence-Time, but the mystical power is just the mystical power. Even in a person's not knowing, that state of Dharma does not fade and that state of Dharma does not die. Although the person does not know it, [that] state of Dharma is the Dharma itself. Although [the person] does not know that carrying water is the mystical power, the state of carrying water as mystical power does not regress. (Dōgen 1994, 75)

The everyday world of projects, tasks and chores is a 'playground' for practice-realization, vis-à-vis not committing (Jpn. *makusa*). As Van der Braak states, "In Zen, practice and realization in the midst of daily activities constitutes liberation. […] All work takes on the character of play or, as Dōgen calls it, playful samadhi" (Van der Braak 2011, 187). Parkes echoes this very point in his reflections on

paragraph 29 of the *Shushōgi*; therein he points out how the difference between our conception of work and play is born out of our subjective tendency to think teleologically, which in turn clashes with the basic fact that many of our tasks, like washing dishes and folding laundry or doing zazen, are, in a Sisyphean fashion, repetitious (i.e. endless toil that amounts to nothing/more of the same).

> If we think about it, the way we so often structure our experience and activities – we distinguish fulfilling ends from burdensome chores in order to achieve our goals – this condemns us to a great deal of drudgery. If we refrain (as Dōgen would encourage us to do) from dividing the world up into means and ends; for example, if we approach the clearing of the sleeping area as an occasion for enjoying life, would that not shift the perspective and enrich our experience? Part of what makes tasks like this into chores is the perception that we are having to do the same this over and over again – whether it is making the bed, washing dishes, or cleaning the room. But it does not take prolonged reflection to realize that things are always different every time, and each situation is in fact unique. It is just that we tend to overlook this because our eye is on some future purpose. (Parkes 2016, 174)

Rather than dualistically carving our daily activities up into means/ends, subject/task, Dōgen advocates for a non-dual, playful mode of embodied engagement as mystical power.

As we already noted, 'mystical-power-as-play' is specifically addressed in the fascicle *Kannon*, "*Avalokitśvara*," wherein Dōgen proposes the idea that Kannon is more than just a symbol of compassion, but is a *bodhisattva* that represents the embodiment of "a life force that is more fundamental to living beings than compassion" (Nishijima 1994, 211). In the opening passage, Dōgen cites a question posed by master Ungan Donjo in a conversation with master Dojo Enchi: "What does the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion do by using his limitlessly abundant hands and eyes?" This question marks the beginning of an encounter dialogue between the two masters whereupon:

> Dojo says, "He is like a person in the night reaching back with a hand to grope for a pillow."
>
> Ungan says, "I understand, I understand."
>
> Dojo says, "How do you understand?"
>
> Ungan says, "the whole body is hands and eyes."
>
> Dojo says, "Your words are nicely spoken. At the same time, your expression of the truth is just eight or ninety percent realization."
>
> Ungan says, "I am just like this. How about you, brother?"
>
> Dojo says, "The thoroughly realized body is hands and eyes." (Dōgen 1994, 211-212)

In this *mondō*, the phrase "he is like a person in the night reaching back with a hand to grope for a pillow," metaphorically captures the non-duality of subject and object vis-à-vis everyday experience, including carrying water and lugging firewood. When asleep, one does not cognitively think to oneself, "I need a pillow," and then, intentionally grope for it. Rather, the whole body is able to 'see' the pillow, and then, with the whole body, 'grope' the pillow. There is, in other words, no ego-centered perspective whereby the pillow, or a piece of firewood, is recognized as something objectively distinct from one's perceiving body. When we use this 'playful perspective' of mysticism to make sense of how the *bodhisattva Kannon* is able to compassionately use his 1000+hands and 1000+eyes, the answer, notwithstanding the apparent difficulty of gracefully and coordinately making use of his limbs and processing sense data, is non-thinking. *Kannon's* acts of compassion, which flow from a mystical power that is terra-genic (i.e. *dharmakaya*, or earth-body of the Buddha), are not acts motivated by dualistic "pity;" rather, they are motivated by the nondual embodiment and interconnected flow between "subject and object" (i.e. non-action), a flow that is embodied in the "extraordinarily ordinary" experiences of carrying water or splitting and lugging firewood.

Dōgen and Nietzsche's philosophy of meaning as 'perspectivism, passion and play' maintains that the earth and the entirety of the more than human world bears incorporation. This outlook is novel for within much of the contemporary literature on the question of life's meaning, the issue of anthropocentrism remains largely unaddressed. In dialogue together, both Dōgen and Nietzsche show that the 'Great Earth' is a salient component of human flourishing; our connection to the diversity of all beings enhances our perspectives, passions and our spirit of play. So much so that without such intimacy and connectivity, the depth of our sense of meaning erodes. Stated differently, while one might have a subjective sense of meaningfulness through perspectivism-passions-play, if this sense of meaningfulness is realized without ever having a close connection to the earth, I believe we can infer that their sense of meaningfulness would have been enhanced and deepened had they cultivated an intimate relationship with the more-than-human-world.

I contend that the earth bears incorporation into our conception of meaningfulness simply because it elevates and enhances our perspectives, our passions and our spirit of playfulness. It is for this reason that the philosophies of Dōgen and Nietzsche are so desperately needed for this current generation whereby ecological destruction and 'doomsday' scenarios, vis-à-vis climate change and pandemics loom. As ecologists tell us in light of the IPBES report on biodiversity, we cannot throw more science and technology at the crisis; rather, we need to rethink our life-styles. While this solution is not new, it has been existentially resisted, perhaps with the help of cognitive dissonance. Rethinking our life-styles implies making sacrifices within our materialistic, consumptive and wasteful lifestyles; and, because sacrifices are interpreted, at least from a perpetual growth perspective of capitalism, as a loss, the message of life-style reform/overcoming has been a tough sell for the consumptive 'herd-instincts' of our global village. By exploring Dōgen and Nietzsche in dialogue together, we have the opportunity to realize deep-green-meaning whereby a metamorphosis of our life-styles is not a sacrifice, but instead an existential gain; by exploring Dōgen and Nietzsche in dialogue together, we have the opportunity to realize that, "The great earth is beyond any ⌜dust⌝" (Jpn. *Daichi sen'ai o zessu*) (ZS 5.235).

§.7.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I attempted several comparative philosophical tasks. First, by assessing the development of comparative scholarship between Buddhism and Nietzsche in general and, Zen/Dōgen and Nietzsche in particular, I was able to show that this area of comparative inquiry goes beyond the mere enumeration of affinities and differences vis-à-vis metaphysics, epistemology and ethics. Specifically, in regards to Dōgen and Nietzsche, in dialogue together these two thinkers open up a new horizon for practicing philosophy and generating new insights. This is particularly the case in regards to value creation. Therein, we explored Nietzsche's philosophy of 'will to power' as psychological thesis with specific attention devoted to the transformative process of realizing new values, vis-à-vis *Űbermensch*, through his metaethical thought experiment: the eternal recurrence of the same. This transformative process, as we noted, is nothing other than our will to power experienced through our affects.

Accordingly, we were able to see how this perspective helps illuminate Dōgen's practice of creating new values. By building on the comparative scholarship of Parkes and Van der Braak, I was able to show how our inquiry into their metaethics helps reinforce the characterization of their philosophies as non-essentialist, non-teleological and non-anthropocentric. Specifically, in regards to non-anthropocentrism, I argued that for Dōgen and Nietzsche their perspective is not reducible to the non-anthropocentric perspectives that have dominated contemporary discussions in environmental ethics (e.g. biocentrism, ecocentrism and deep ecology). Accordingly, I also showed that William Murdy's arguments against non-anthropocentric philosophies fail to demonstrate that we ought not take seriously the non-anthropocentric perspectives as we attempt to ameliorate the current ecological crisis we, as a global community, are currently facing. From this inquiry I was then able to take up White's thesis concerning the origins of the ecological crisis which, as I noted earlier, maintains that Judeo-Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion/world-view; and, because the roots of the ecological crisis are a result of anthropocentrism, it follows that the ecological crisis as we know it is a result of Judeo-Christianity. I reformulated his thesis/argument by substituting transcendentalism for Judeo-Christianity in order to cast a broader net so as to include any world view that attempts to defend teleological meaning or purpose outside of this very existence. Accordingly, and in contradistinction to White's belief, I argued that Dōgen's Zen, particularly in dialogue with Nietzsche, can provide a philosophical outlook that can help us overcome the crisis of meaning that our anthropocentric lifestyles generate.

Finally, by bringing Dōgen and Nietzsche in dialogue together so to address and thereby overcome anthropocentrism, I was able to reveal three salient features of their praxis-oriented philosophies: *perspectivism, passion* and *play*. I contend that these three non-transcendental philosophical practices are, in light of ruminating upon the works of Dōgen and Nietzsche, sufficient for realizing meaning and purpose that is ever changing, dynamic and fully intimate with the earth itself. Ultimately, what we are able to learn from this comparative dialogue is that anti-realism in general, and anti-cognitivism in particular, do not paralyze our ability to formulate ethical judgments or creating new

values for us to practice. Quite the contrary, they open up new horizons for practitioners of philosophy to say "YES" to life whereby, "On the mountains, rivers, and the great earth, not a speck of dust" (Jpn. *Daichi senga sen'ai o zessu*) (ZS 7.286).

Conclusion

"Not Committing" Value Judgments, "Not Doing" Metaethics

§7.1 *Summary*

How can Dōgen's anti-realist metaethical outlook, coupled with a nuanced theory of anti-cognitivism, in dialogue with Nietzsche's writings, contribute to contemporary Western meta-ethical debates, especially regarding non-anthropocentric value creation? This has been the main research question around which this dissertation has been framed. In order to answer this question, I have attempted to interpret Dōgen's writings in a metaethical way that: (1) is anti-realist in regards to the status of moral values, and anti-cognitivist with regard to the meaning of moral judgments and propositions; (2) constitutes an "active" moral nihilism with regard to moral ontology and value creation; (3) constitutes a moral skepticism with regard to moral epistemology.

To realize this interpretation, in Chapter one, "Anti-realism in Contemporary Metaethics and Nietzsche," we began by examining the philosophical commitments of anti-realism in general, error theory and non-cognitivism in particular so to set the stage for a metaethical examination of Nietzsche. We saw that Nietzsche's metaethics encompasses the following philosophical horizons: (1) perspectivism vis-à-vis the death of 'God' and nihilism as a cultural phenomenon; (2) anti-realist commitments vis-à-vis the nature of language and the role of the affects; and (3) the practice of self-overcoming via will to power, revaluation of values, and value creation. We discovered that the anti-realist characterization is useful for characterizing Nietzsche's metaethics in light of his perspective regarding moral facts/properties and mind-independent normative truths. However, we also noted that both error theory, fictionalism and non-cognitivism fall short in being able to capture the nuances of his perspectivism vis-à-vis the will to power. Accordingly, I proposed 'anti-cognitivism' as an alternative characterization that strikes a middle-way between error theory/fictionalism and non-cognitivism, vis-à-vis the nature of moral propositions and judgments. In keeping with his philosophical commitments regarding language and

ineffability, Nietzsche's anti-cognitivism maintains that language and moral propositions cannot describe nor express mind-independent normative truths. Ultimately, the anti-realist and anti-cognitivist lens I am proffering for interpreting Nietzsche's metaethics provides a coherent addendum to Van der Braak's characterization of Nietzsche, as well as Dōgen, as non-essentialist, non-teleological and non-anthropocentric.

In Chapter two, "Buddhism and Western Moral Philosophy," we reviewed the different ways in which Buddhist ethical perspectives have been interpreted through Western ethical theories, and in what ways Buddhist meta-ethics in general can provide new and fruitful perspectives within this arena of scholarship. I began by treating the hermeneutical debate concerning the merits of interpreting Buddhism through Western ethical theories, specifically Aristotelian virtue theory and consequentialism. Then, by examining the normative and metaethical perspectives in both Theravāda and Mahāyāna texts and traditions I was able to show that other interpretations, in addition to virtue theory and consequentialism, including pluralistic virtue theory and particularism provide additional nuance for interpreting the 'nature' of Buddhist ethics. More specifically in regards to Mahāyāna Buddhism, I showed the philosophy of emptiness (Skt. *śūnyatā*), particularly in the context of East Asian traditions such as *Chan*/Zen, opens up alternative interpretations, including the continental perspectives of Nietzsche, whereby the objective/cognitivist standards of normative evaluation are overcome. This in turn set the stage for a more systematic analysis of Mahāyāna metaethics; by engaging the works of Finnigan, Siderits, D'Amato and Guerrero specifically the metaethical challenge of providing a justificatory account for conventional normative judgments while recognizing that all things, including normative values are empty. In regards to Finnigan, we saw that while anti-realism is generally accepted as an appropriate characterization for *Madhyamaka*, it is not clear that non-cognitivism can account for conventional judgments and normative beliefs. However, Finnigan does suggest the possibility of finding justificatory grounds through an appeal to moral practice and phenomenology, rather than ethical theory, per se. Finally, we also considered the prospects of treating Mahāyāna Buddhism as global fictionalism as proposed by Siderits

and D'Amato, as well as some of the challenges, as enumerated by Guerrero, against this characterization. According to Guerrero, Buddhist anti-realism should consider other metaethical strategies for justifying conventional judgments and beliefs. It is in light of this advice, as well as Finnigan's suggestion to consider the possibility of finding justificatory grounds for normative beliefs via practice, that I introduced Dōgen's metaethics by considering Guilbault's 'conventionalist' and Davis' 'contextualisit' interpretations. In light of their research, I concluded that both interpretations are promising metaethical counterparts to Dōgen's anti-realist metaethics, specifically in regards to providing justification for conventional normative beliefs. However, I noted that these characterizations only assist us in making sense of what normative expressions say; thus they do not clarify what normative expressions mean. Accordingly, I stipulated the metaethical concept anti-cognitivism to do just this; for Dōgen, normative expressions do not describe mind-independent facts/truths, nor are they reducible to feelings and beliefs, but instead they reveal and conceal perspectives.

In Chapter three, "Beginning on the Path of Revealing and Concealing: Situating Dōgen's Metaethics," I provided the philosophical backstory of Dōgen's life as a Buddhist thinker during the Kamakura period, as well as a religious reformer and founder of the *Sōtō* (Ch. *Caodong*) tradition of Zen in Japan. Herein, I framed this backstory in order to begin my inquiry into Dōgen's metaethics in subsequent chapters. I treated his critical reflections regarding the Mahāyāna philosophy of original enlightenment (Jpn. *hongaku*) and Buddha-nature (Jpn. *busshō*), thereby revealing salient features of Dōgen's 'way-seeking' metaethic, vis-à-vis his philosophy of zazen and the nonduality of practice and realization; accordingly, I showed how Dōgen's Zen perspective differs from the 'silent illumination' teachings and practice of continental *Caodong* teachers and masters, vis-à-vis complete enlightenment. Moreover, I also showed how Dōgen's philosophy of Buddha-nature and time provides, as Guilbault argues, a general blue print for his metaethical standpoint of antirealism. Finally, I concluded this treatment by also examining Dōgen's perspective of the bodhisattva ideal and the doctrine of skillful means (Skt. *upāya*); I showed how his reevaluation of the doctrine of original enlightenment, vis-à-vis

nonduality of practice and realization, provides a reevaluation of the doctrine of skillful means. Thus, instead of interpreting skillful means a consequentialist philosophy, I contend that Dōgen interprets such in light of the East Asian philosophy of non-action (Ch. *wu-wei*).

In Chapter four, "Dōgen's Uncreated Metaethic," I framed my examination of Dōgen's metaethical characterization of moral values – good, bad and indifference – as *mushō*, 'uncreated,' as well as his relativist characterization of right action. Based upon a close reading of the fascicle *Shoaku-Makusa*, I concluded that his axiological reflections are best understood from the metaethical perspective of anti-realism, which is a characterization that is in keeping with the *Madhyamaka* philosophy of emptiness. At the same time, I was careful not to pigeonhole Dōgen's anti-realism into either error theory, fictionalism, nor non-cognitivism. Specifically, in regards to non-cognitivism, I argued that Dōgen's perspective does not invite the conclusion that moral propositions are reducible to feelings and emotions as if feelings and emotions are inherently distinct from reason. As I stipulated, anti-cognitivism is the metaethical position that maintains that moral propositions do not describe moral facts nor express normative truths, but rather they reveal and conceal a normative perspective that is not truth-apt.

In Chapter five, "Anti-cognitivism: Dōgen's Language of Morals," I provided a treatment of the role and nature of language in Zen practice and literature in light of the Buddhist philosophy of emptiness and the logic of non-duality. Based upon the perspectives of Dale S. Wright, Victor Sōgen Hori, Steven Heine and Rupert Read, we were able to see how language is not reducible to an instrumentalist conceptual scheme, but rather is embedded within our everyday experiences, including non-theoretical perception. This non-dualistic philosophy of language, which overturns popular conceptions of Zen as ineffable (i.e. "a separate transmission not founded on words and letters"), is able to show how Zen language can operate on both conventional and ultimate levels, *hen'i* and *shōi*, thereby providing an ability to meaningfully participate in normative discourse. And, in light of the distinction between descriptive and performative speech acts, I continued to make the case that his nuanced perspective is best characterized as anti-cognitivism. From there, we examined a selection of fascicles from the *Shōbōgenzō*

that examine the nature of *karma*, vis-à-vis right action; therein we saw that an anti-cognitivist interpretation helps show that Dōgen's metaethics is a way-seeking practice of realizing the bodhisattva's vows. By building off of DeCaroli's and Schroeder's interpretations, we discovered that Dōgen's perspective of karma is mind-dependent, non-essentialist and relative to the Buddhist tradition. And, with some help from the writings of Kim and Van der Braak, we noted that rather than a "separate transmission outside of ethics," the moral life for Zen, Dōgen in particular, is embodied through "awakening the mind."

In Chapter six, "Ethical Non-Thinking and the Metaethics of Meditation," I examined how *zazen* is, according to Dōgen, central to practicing ethics. By exploring the philosophical interface between the *Mahāyāna* philosophy of emptiness, meditation and ethics within the context of Dōgen's writings, my treatment pivoted around Dōgen's phenomenology of non-thinking that manifests from a practitioner's insight into the emptiness/non-essentialism of all existing things. The main argument we thereby set out to defend was:

P1. *Zazen* is central to Dōgen's ethical practice/outlook.

P2. Non-thinking is central to Dōgen's practice of *zazen*.

C: Therefore, non-thinking is central to Dogen's ethical practice/outlook.

As I proceeded to flesh out my defense, I discovered that the practice of zazen and the phenomenology of non-thinking is how conventional moral discourse and normative prescriptions are justified; for Zen practitioners, the justification of moral beliefs is realized in practice, not grounded in theory. For Dōgen, I concluded, this is precisely non-thinking embodied within the vows of the *bodhisattva*. By drawing the connection between non-thinking and Dōgen's metaethics, we were also able to see why his moral philosophy vis-à-vis *zazen* can be fruitfully illuminated through the lens of anti-cognitivism. Dōgen's way-seeking practice of doing philosophy, specifically his writing on the nature of moral values as uncreated, and the nature of moral action that is motivated by non-thinking and embodied through not-

committing/non-action, *wu-wei*, is oriented towards realizing the vows of the *bodhisattva*. Accordingly, we also saw that Dōgen's normative teachings and instructions for practicing zazen do not invite cognitivist interpretations such as error theory or fictionalism. In light of Dōgen's philosophical commitments to emptiness, it is likely that he would characterize this metaethical view as form of essentialism due to the rigid divide it assumes between truth and falsity.

For Dōgen, the ethical practice of non-thinking, which is not the negation of thinking proper, as the authentic fulfillment of the *bodhisattva's* vows, is fueled by compassion. However, such fuel is not fully realized until one has realized that all phenomenal things and events are empty, and that there is no inherent/essential separation between subjects and objects of experience. For Dōgen, as well as for the practitioners of Zen to whom he was writing for, it is the state of compassion, arising from our insight into emptiness, that ought to define the practice of ethics. Herein, compassion is not an isolated feeling, sentiment or mood set apart from other feelings.

Finally, in Chapter seven, "Non-Anthropocentric Value Creation: Dōgen and Nietzsche's Faithfulness to the Great Earth," I began my comparative inquiry between Dōgen and Nietzsche by exploring some recent trends in Buddhism and Nietzsche scholarship in general, and Zen/Dōgen and Nietzsche in particular. By going beyond the mere enumeration of affinities and differences vis-à-vis metaphysics, epistemology and ethics, I was able to show that, when brought into dialogue together, Dōgen and Nietzsche open up a new horizon for practicing philosophy and generating new insights. More specifically, by building off the comparative scholarship of Parkes and Van der Braak, I was able to show how our inquiry into their metaethics helps reinforce the characterization of their philosophies as non-essentialist, non-teleological and non-anthropocentric, particularly as I engaged White's thesis that Judeo-Christian anthropocentrism is cause of the ecological crisis. As White maintains, since Judeo-Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion/world-view, and, because the roots of the ecological crisis are a result of anthropocentrism, it follows that the ecological crisis as we know it is a result of the Judeo-Christian world-view. By substituting transcendentalism for Judeo-Christianity, I reformulated

White's causal argument to cast a broader net in order to include any world view that attempts to defend teleological meaning or purpose outside of this very existence. Accordingly, and in contradistinction to White, I argued that Dōgen's Zen, particularly in dialogue with Nietzsche, can provide a philosophical outlook that can help us overcome the crisis of meaning that is generated by our anthropocentric lifestyles. Thus, by bringing Dōgen and Nietzsche in dialogue together in order to address and overcome anthropocentrism, I revealed three salient features of their praxis-oriented philosophies: perspectivism, passion and play. A livelihood of perspectivism, passion and play is, as I interpret Dōgen and Nietzsche, sufficient for realizing meaning and purpose that is ever changing, dynamic and fully intimate with the earth itself. And so, based upon the conclusions drawn in the earlier chapters, it becomes clear that anti-realism in general, and anti-cognitivism in particular, does not paralyze our ability to formulate ethical judgments, create new values and thereby proffer a moral imagination for rethinking the present and looking ahead to the future.

§7.*2 Subsequent Reflections: Philosophy After Comparative Philosophy*

So where do we go from here? What comes next now that this comparative inquiry has reached its terminus? Perhaps Jason Wirth's digestive metaphor provides the best response: "Philosophy after comparative philosophy ruminates on philosophy itself" (Wirth 2019, xxix). In other words, just as a cow or a goat cannot digest food without a second chewing, we need to digest the metaethical perspectives, prescriptions and practices explored in this dissertation slowly, and transform Dōgen and Nietzsche into philosophical cud. By chewing again, and again, the nutrients and medicinal properties of their writings can be absorbed and embodied.

Diet and food choices are, no doubt, all too effective for both treating and preventing illness. However, this philosophy of 'wellness' is dependent upon our ability to digest well. If one has a gluten allergy, for example, then organic homemade bread is not medicine, rather, it is poison. If Zen and Nietzsche, particularly Dōgen and Nietzsche in dialogue together, are medicine, then this dialogue is, as Wirth characterizes, "strong medicine that liberates thinking and living from the turmoil (*dukkha*) of

stupidity, ideological fixations, stinginess, greed, aggression, self-obsessiveness, and servility to the status quo" (Wirth 2019, xxi). Ultimately, this variegated horizon of turmoil is, I contend, the horizon of applied ethics, and this where I see Dōgen, in dialogue with Nietzsche, being able to contribute new insights, particularly within: (1) environmental ethics; (2) medical ethics; (3) work and business ethics; (4) and conversations about life's meaning.

By emphasizing a turn towards applied ethics, I am following the critical thinking perspective of Evan Thompson as presented in his *Why I Am Not A Buddhist* (2020). In it, Thompson challenges contemporary scholarly efforts to sanitize Buddhist meditation for Western audiences by claiming that meditation is a science of the mind. Rather than viewing meditation as science of mind, Thompson defends a normative interpretation of mindfulness and meditation. For example, when it comes to understanding the nature of mind via meditation, "The answers must come from the Buddhist "mind doctrine," that is, from Buddhist philosophy, which is not just descriptive but also inherently normative (it makes value judgments) and soteriological (it is concerned with salvation and liberation)" (Thompson 2020, 33). Thus, according to Thompson, "The concepts of nirvana (*nirvāna*) and awakening (*bodhi*) aren't scientific concepts; they are soteriological ones. They aren't psychological constructs whose validity can be established through measurement" (Thompson 2020, 34). Ultimately, I am sympathetic with Thompson's standpoint that meditation is a normative practice. Approaching Buddhist meditation, *zazen* specifically, as a normative/soteriological practice, rather than a science of the mind, has the potential to open up more fruitful opportunities for letting go of our emotional/attitudinal attachments, compulsive habits of overconsumption, and disembodied relationship with the 'Great Earth.' In regards to (1), environmental ethics, we have already noted the non-anthropocentric perspective these thinkers share in Chapter seven; and, Wirth's *Mountains, Rivers, and the Great Earth; Reading Gary Snyder and Dōgen In An Age of Ecological Crisis* (2017), has already revealed the merits of this kind of comparative dialogue so to help attune us to the more-than-human-world in new ways. No doubt, a more expansive examination of Dōgen in dialogue with Nietzsche, vis-à-vis the ecological crisis, than the one that was

carried out in Chapter seven is warranted. I contend that there is much that Dōgen and Nietzsche can offer us to ruminate upon when it comes to discussions regarding the ecological values, sustainability and the capitalistic-technocratic belief that we can innovate our way out of this crisis without curbing our economic and consumptive life styles. In regards to (2), medical ethics, the next culture war that looms on the horizon within American society appears to be medical assistance in dying. From Dōgen's fascicle *Shoji*, Birth-Death, to Zarathustra's "On Free Death," both thinkers in dialogue together can help overcome the ideological fixation that killing is always inherently worse than letting die; and in doing so, come to realize death is itself a process of living, and that to in order to live well, one must understand what it means to die well. In regards to (3), work and business ethics, as our world faces a host of social inequalities that stem from an economic system that is fueled by greed and hatred, and politically defended through ideological delusion, we need to create a new clearing for citizens to realize a healthy future. Both Nietzsche and Dōgen recognized the importance of work, though their values are non-teleological; they are not, contrary to the defenders of capitalism, motivated by "fame or gain." Moreover, the value of work, including manual labor has begun to surface as an area of philosophical reflection, such as within Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (1990), Matthew Crawford's, *Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry Into the Value of Work* (2009), and Philip Ackerman-Leist's, *Up Tunket Road: The Education of a Modern Homesteader* (2010). Dōgen in dialogue with Nietzsche thus provides an opportunity for translating Zen monastic standards, such as instructions for the cook (Jpn. *tenzo*), into contemporary homesteading values and/or craftsperson aesthetics. No doubt, as I write this dissertation amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, it becomes clear that as society looks to the future to mitigate and overcome the many challenges that have surfaced since the outbreak began that conceptions of work that are both meaningful and sustainable are needed. Finally, in regards to (4), the meaning of life, we have recently seen non-Western voices included into predominantly Western conversations about the meaning of life. In the fourth edition of the Cahn and Klemke anthology, *The Meaning of Life: A Reader* (2017), both Confucian and early Buddhist perspectives are included so to provide an alternative looking glass for thinking about this perennial

philosophical topic. I contend that Dōgen and Nietzsche can help broaden this conversation further, particularly when we consider the ideas of perspectivism, passion and play we reviewed in Chapter seven. Moreover, the question, "to what extent does the earth bear incorporation into our conception of meaning?", has been widely neglected by scholars working on this metaethical topic.

In closing, what is philosophy after comparative philosophy, vis-à-vis this dissertation of 'not committing' value judgments and 'not doing' metaethics? In short, it is the ruminating process of chewing again. Indeed, how one chews upon the perspectives explored in this dissertation will give rise to a host of new questions and new reflections. For example, how would Zarathustra reply to *kōan* case 14 from the *Mumonkon*, "Nanzen Kills a Cat?"[191]; does a "beyond good and evil" maxim such as, "One has watched life badly if one has not also seen the hand that considerately – kills" (Nietzsche 1966, 80), shine new light upon this normative *kōan* case? Or, is it possible that Nietzsche's three metamorphoses of the spirit is able to lend hermeneutical assistance in making sense of the practice of Zen awakening that is captured by the "A is ~ A, ∴ A is A" logic embedded within the verse "mountains are mountains, rivers are rivers…mountains are not mountains, rivers are not rivers…mountains are mountains, rivers are rivers"? Or, does Nietzsche's distinction between sleep and victory, which he makes in his *The Will to Power* (Nietzsche 1968 374), philosophically correspond to the division between other-power (Jpn. *tariki*) and self-power (Jpn. *jiriki*) in Japanese Buddhism, particularly Pure Land Buddhism and Zen? I welcome such ruminations as they may provide additional nutrients for realizing good health while simultaneously pushing us to rethink what is deserving of philosophical reflection. If we take our time and chew like a ruminant, perhaps we just might become what we are, via what we eat; hence the capping phrase, "With

[191] The subject matter of this *kōan* involves a group of monks who are disputing about a cat, whereupon master Nansen takes hold of the cat threatens to kill it if the monks are unable to articulate and express a word of Zen. Since the monks failed in their attempt to express the inexpressible, the cat was killed. *Prima facie*, this kōan seems to reflect an immoralist perspective that is cruel and indifferent to the sentient desires of non-human animals. However, according to Shibayama, such an interpretation would be "an extreme misunderstanding" (Shibayama 1974, 108). To realize the 'Zen thrust' of this *kōan*, Shibayama contends that "If we are not aware that *kōan* belong to quite another dimension than ethical or prudential and practical activities of men, we shall forever be unable even to glimpse their real significance" (Shibayama 1974, 108).

coarse chewing you are quickly satisfied, with fine chewing you are seldom hungry" (Jpn. *Sosan wa akiyasuku, saishaku wa uegatashi*) (ZS 8.256).

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Summary

The focus of this dissertation falls within the general arena of comparative philosophy; in it, I explore Zen Master Dōgen's (1200-1253 CE) writings on ethics through Western metaethical categories in general, as well as the normative writings of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900 CE) in particular. The overarching query of my research is to understand how Dōgen's writings, specifically when placed in dialogue with Nietzsche, can contribute to contemporary Western metaethical discussions concerning: (1) the metaphysical status of values; (2) the epistemic nature of moral expressions and judgments; and (3) non-anthropocentric value creation. Accordingly, I argue that Dōgen's writings on ethics can be interpreted as anti-realist, vis-à-vis the metaphysical status of values, and anti-cognitivist, vis-à-vis the meaning of normative speech acts and value judgments. In addition, I maintain, in light of Nietzsche's perspectivism, that Dōgen's practice of ethics can be understood as "active" moral nihilism in regards to non-anthropocentric value creation, and moral skepticism in regards to moral truth and knowledge. Overall, this inquiry shows that Dōgen's practice of philosophy in general, ethics in particular, is motivated, similar to that of Nietzsche, by "way seeking" values. In other words, in contradistinction to providing the necessary and sufficient conditions that can ungird theoretical beliefs (i.e. "truth-seeking"), it is the realization of a practice for individual and communal flourishing that is the primary concern for Dōgen. For Dōgen, such a practice is nothing other than non-thinking (Jpn. *hishiryō*) via seated meditation (Jpn. *zazen*). Thus, this "way-seeking" approach to ethics is what allows for Dōgen to defend a non-anthropocentric perspective whereby the earth and the entirety of existing beings are understood to be the embodiment of Buddha-nature (Jpn. *busshō*).

Notwithstanding their "way-seeking" approaches to philosophy, what makes a dialogue between Dōgen and Nietzsche fruitful are the nuances in their metaethical perspectives. While both thinkers can be properly characterized as anti-realist in regards to the metaphysics of morals, meaning there are no mind-independent values or normative truths, their writings show that they cannot be pigeonholed into any of the standard anti-realist metaethical counterparts, vis-à-vis moral epistemology, such as error-

theory, fictionalism or non-cognitivism. This is due in part to the fact that these metaethical theories entail dualisms between facts and values, as well as feelings/affects and reason, which are not in keeping with the non-dualistic philosophies of Dōgen, vis-à-vis emptiness (Skt *śūnyatā*), nor Nietzsche, vis-à-vis will to power. Thus, one of the main scholarly contributions this dissertation offers is the stipulation of a new metaethical counterpart to anti-realism, which is anti-cognitivism. Unlike error-theory and fictionalism, which dualistically maintains that all normative expressions and value judgments are false (i.e. duality between truth and falsity), and, unlike non-cognitivism which dualistically maintains that all moral expressions and value judgments are reducible to feelings, emotions or attitudinal leanings (i.e. duality between reason and affect), anti-cognitivism, as I define such, is more nuanced; it maintains that normative expressions do not refer to objective mind-independent truths/facts, nor are they reducible to subjective feelings/affects, but instead they reveal and conceal perspectives. By examining a range of normative issues in Dōgen's writings, including karma, this dissertation shows that anti-cognitivism is helpful for clarifying not only what ethical expressions say, but also what they mean.

Based upon an anti-cognitivist interpretation of Dōgen's ethical writings, I am also able to show how Dōgen critically rethinks traditional normative concepts and practices from a non-dualistic vantage point. For example, the normative concept of "skillful means" (Skt. *upāya*) which is associated with the action-guiding normative outlook of bodhisattvas, has been widely interpreted through the Western ethical theory of consequentialism, which maintains that the ends of an action determine whether the action itself is good or bad, right or wrong. In keeping with the non-dualistic philosophy of emptiness (Skt. *śūnyatā*) that supports Dōgen's "uncreated" (Jpn. *mushō*) metaethical perspective, this dissertation shows that he rejected any and all dualistic distinctions between the means and the ends of actions, thus rendering any consequentialist interpretation of skillful means untenable. Instead of consequentialism, this dissertation shows how Dōgen appeals to the East Asian philosophy of non-action (Ch. *wu-wei*) to make sense of the normative behavior of bodhisattvas, vis-à-vis skillful means, specifically in light of the phenomenology of non-thinking and the practice of zazen. Herein, rather than dualistically focusing upon

the means of a normative act (i.e. deontology) or the ends (i.e. consequentialism), Dōgen emphasizes the idea of effortless action whereby the duality between means and ends, as well as subject and object, dissolves. Ultimately, because skillful means as effortless action is conditioned by non-thinking and zazen, this dissertation shows that zazen, according to Dōgen, is best understood as a normative practice.

Finally, this dissertation shows how the non-dualistic philosophies that support the metaethical perspectives of Dōgen, vis-à-vis emptiness, and Nietzsche, vis-à-vis the will to power, open up a comparative dialogue concerning non-anthropocentric value creation. Specifically in regards to Dōgen, while non-anthropocentrism has been a salient normative commitment since early Buddhist traditions in that non-sentient beings, such as plants and seeds, were regarded as borderline cases, vis-à-vis normative consideration, Dōgen's non-dual philosophy reinterprets such in a way that moves us beyond biocentric normative commitments to that of holism whereby elemental beings, including mountains and valley streams, are regarded as moral patients (i.e. beings deserving moral consideration). Moreover, not only does Dōgen's non-anthropocentrism expand the range of the kinds of beings that are regarded as moral patients, but he also elevates the status of all beings that constitute the earth and the greater cosmos to that of moral agents who expressively participate within the anti-cognitive horizon of revealing and concealing perspectives. In other words, from Dōgen's perspective, not only should we regard all beings with compassion and care, but also recognize that they are inviting us to consider new perspectives from their vantage point. Ultimately, it is through their revealing and concealing perspectives that Dōgen maintains that all existing beings are themselves Buddha-nature.

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